# The Wild Life of Kurdistan

*Hawre Qandil*

The Wild Life of Kurdistan: A Gift to Humanity

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# The Right to Share, Preserve, and Protect — The Voice of the Land and Its Living Soul

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I extend my deepest gratitude to every reader, activist, and educator who helps spread this knowledge — to Kurds, Persians, Turks, Azeris, Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians, and all peoples of the region and beyond — that they may understand the deep and sacred bond between the Kurdish nation and its land.

Let no one use this book for personal financial gain. Let it instead be shared as a moral and educational offering, freely given and freely received, for the benefit of present and future generations. May your effort in sharing this book serve both nature and nation — to protect the living world of Kurdistan, to strengthen its people's awareness, and to advance the eternal cause of peace, justice, and freedom.

A nation’s history is not written only in human words or deeds — it is also whispered through the mountains, sung by the rivers, and carried on the wings of its birds. To know Kurdistan truly, one must listen to its wild heart.

This book is born from love — love for the land, its creatures, and the eternal bond that unites them. It is a tribute to Kurdistan’s mountains and valleys, its flowing rivers and hidden springs, and to the eagles, gazelles, wolves, and songbirds that keep its spirit alive. In their freedom, endurance, and beauty, we find the reflection of our own nation’s struggle and hope.

For generations, the borders of men have divided Kurdistan, but no border can confine its life. The eagle crosses them daily. The deer and the fox know no flag. Nature remembers the truth that politics forgets — that this land and its beings belong to one another.

By preserving Kurdistan’s wildlife, we preserve the story of its people. Each creature is a guardian of memory — a living testimony that this land is ancient, alive, and indivisible.

May this book awaken love for every living soul that calls Kurdistan home. May it teach that the cry of an eagle or the rustle of a mountain breeze carries the same message: that life, like freedom, is sacred and must be protected.

For when the wild heart of Kurdistan beats freely, so too will the heart of its people.

With sincere gratitude and respect,
**Hawrê Qandil**
*The Wild Life of Kurdistan*

# Preface

***The Wildlife of Kurdistan — Heart of a Homeland***

This book is born from a deep and unshakable love for the land I call home — **Kurdistan**.
It is a tribute to its mountains and rivers, to its oak forests and sunlit plains, and above all, to the living creatures that share this land with us. For centuries, the identity, language, and history of the Kurdish people have been denied, their homeland divided by borders, and their voices silenced.
But **it was not only the Kurdish people whose identity was erased**.
The *very identity of Kurdistan's nature* — its birds, its animals, its forests, its rivers — has also been denied and renamed.

The creatures of this land, born from the Zagros, Taurus, and Qandil highlands, were forced to be labelled *Persian*, *Mesopotamian*, *Anatolian*, *Syrian*, or *Arab* — as if their true homeland did not exist.
Yet every feather, claw, footprint, and cry tells a different truth:
**these are Zagrosian, Kurdish, and Kurdistanian beings — shaped by the mountains and valleys of this land and no other.**

The Golden Eagle that circles over Qandil, the gazelle that runs across Bradost, the partridge that calls from Dersim, the kingfisher shining above Sirwan — all carry the unique identity of Kurdistan, not the names forced upon them by borders or politics.

I created this book out of love — love for the mountains that raised me, the rivers that shaped my soul, and every bird and animal that taught me the meaning of freedom. My heart belongs to this land: its stones, its soil, its wind, its flowers, and its silent, enduring spirit.
It is this love that guided every page. I wished to share with you — the reader — the beauty, history, and dignity of the creatures who walk, fly, and breathe across Kurdistan.

Kurdistan's wildlife tells a story far more ancient and pure than the divisions of humankind.
In their flight, song, and survival lies the symbol of a nation longing for peace, recognition, and independence. These beings — unbound by man's borders — live as nature intended: **freely, fiercely, and faithfully** to the land that has nurtured them for millennia.

Through documenting these beings and the landscapes they inhabit, I hope to awaken a deeper awareness — not only of Kurdistan's natural treasures, but also of its right to exist freely and proudly upon its own soil.
The land and its creatures are inseparable; their survival is intertwined with the freedom of Kurdistan itself.
When the world recognises this harmony, it will understand that to protect Kurdistan's wildlife is also to protect the spirit, culture, and memory of its people.

Every feather, every paw print, every echo in the mountain air tells a part of our shared story.
The eagles that soar above Agirî, the gazelles that cross the plains of Wan, the foxes of Soran, the wolves of Shaho, the turtles of Hawraman — all are witnesses of a timeless land whose essence cannot be erased or renamed.

I wrote this book not only for knowledge — but for **love**.
Love for nature, love for humanity, and love for a homeland whose beauty deserves to be known, cherished, and protected. I hope that as you read, you will feel the heartbeat of Kurdistan in every description, in every landscape, in every creature.

May this book inspire respect, compassion, and protection for every living being that calls Kurdistan home.
May it remind us that as we protect nature, we protect our own souls.
And may it encourage all who read it to carry these stories forward — to share, publish, and preserve them — so that future generations will continue to celebrate the wild, free heart of this land.

One day, perhaps, Kurdistan — and all its creatures — will live in harmony, free and independent, as they were always meant to be.

Until that day, may our love keep them alive.

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# Introduction

***The Living Heart of Kurdistan***

Kurdistan is a land where every mountain watches over the valleys beneath it, where every river remembers the footsteps of ancient peoples, and where the sky has carried the cries of birds for thousands of years. It is a homeland woven from stone, water, wind, and memory. To walk across its plains and ridges is to feel the presence of countless generations, both human and wild.

This book is a journey through that living world — the world of the golden eagle that circles above Qandil, the gazelle that runs across the warm plains of Garmian, the tortoise that carries centuries upon its back, and the night gecko that whispers beneath the old mud-brick homes of our villages. Each creature carries a story, a memory, a piece of a homeland that has endured both beauty and hardship.

The wildlife of Kurdistan is not simply a list of species or scientific classifications. It is the living soul of a people. Our mountains have shaped us, our rivers have carried our history, and our animals have walked beside us since before our stories were written down. The call of a partridge at dawn, the shadow of a falcon over a cliff, the low rustle of a fox moving through orchards — these are part of the Kurdish spirit.

For thousands of years, Kurdish shepherds read the sky through the movements of birds. Hunters and travellers knew the land by watching the behaviour of wolves, deer, and migrating flocks. Children learned about courage, patience, and endurance by observing the quiet strength of the tortoise, the determination of the lark, and the loyalty of the mountain goat. In our stories, poems, and songs, these creatures became symbols of bravery, freedom, wisdom, and love.

Yet this beauty is fragile. War has scarred parts of the land. Forests have been burned. Rivers have been poisoned. Many animals that once roamed freely now struggle to find a home. Some species survive only in isolated valleys or in the protected silence of high

mountains. This book carries their voices — voices that risk being lost if we do not listen.

I wrote this book to honour the animals of Kurdistan, to preserve their stories, and to protect their memory. It is for Kurds everywhere — those who still live on the land and those far away who carry it quietly in their hearts. It is for the children of our new generations, so they know the richness of their homeland and the beauty of the creatures who share it.

This book is also a tribute to resilience. Just as the people of Kurdistan have endured hardship yet held on to hope, the wildlife of this land also survives with quiet strength. In every eagle's flight, there is a message of freedom. In every gazelle's leap, there is a reminder of grace. In every bird's song at dawn, there is a promise of renewal.

Here, in these pages, the mountains speak through the wings of birds, the rivers echo through fish and amphibians, and the warm earth whispers through reptiles and mammals that have lived here since time beyond memory. They are not only animals — they are guardians, symbols, teachers, and companions of our story.

This book invites you to rediscover a homeland through the eyes of its wild creatures — to feel the wind of their wings, the weight of their silence, the echo of their footsteps, and the depth of their meaning.
For when we understand the wild heart of Kurdistan, we understand ourselves.

# The Land Where Nature Remembers

Kurdistan is a land where mountains rise like ancient guardians over valleys filled with memory. Every slope, spring, and stone carries the echo of those who lived here long before borders or maps existed. This landscape holds the footsteps of shepherds, warriors, farmers, travellers, and the countless wild creatures who have shared these lands with us.

The wildlife of Kurdistan is woven into the identity of its people. Long before written history, Kurds learned the world through animals: the weather through the flight of birds, the seasons through migration, the presence of danger through the behaviour of foxes, wolves, and goats. For our ancestors, understanding nature was not a luxury — it was survival, wisdom, and culture.

Birds taught us time; mammals taught us patience; reptiles taught us silence; rivers taught us endurance. Even the smallest creature carried a lesson. The call of the hoopoe reminded villagers of rain; the rising flight of the lark signalled a change in wind; the sudden stillness of gazelles told shepherds that a predator was near.

In Kurdish culture, every animal has a place in stories, songs, and beliefs. Some represent freedom — like the eagle that circles above the Zagros. Others embody beauty and gentleness — like the gazelle that dances across the plains. Some animals became symbols of strength and resistance, while others reflected loyalty, protection, or the quiet endurance of the land.

But these animals are more than symbols. They are living beings struggling to survive in a region shaped by conflict, climate pressure, and habitat loss. Forests have burned. Rivers have been polluted. Valleys once filled with gazelles stand silent. Many species remain only in the mountains, protected by their remoteness.

Yet, despite everything, life continues. An eagle still rises over Qandil at dawn. A fox still crosses the orchards at night. A tortoise still follows its ancient path beneath the sun. A

lark still sings above the wheat fields, announcing the morning in the same voice it has used for thousands of years.

This section invites the reader to understand Kurdistan not only through its people, but through its wild heart — through the creatures who have kept their place in the land even when humans could not. They remind us of who we were, who we are, and what we must protect.

To study them is to study ourselves.
To protect them is to protect our own memory.
To honour them is to honour Kurdistan.

# 🕊️ Section 1 – Birds of Kurdistan

## (Balindekanî Kurdistan / باڵندەکانی کوردستان)

### Graceful, free, and full of song — the sky's children of our homeland

Kurdistan is a homeland of wings — a vast tapestry of mountains, forests, plains, plateaus, and rivers spread across Bakur, Bashur, Rojhilat, and Rojava. From the snowy throne of **Agrî (Mount Ararat)** to the deep blue basin of **Wan**, from the rugged cliffs of **Colemerg (Hakkarî)** to the rolling hills of **Garmian**, from the forests of **Dersim** to the fertile stretches of **Erzingan, Erzerom, and Bayburt**, every part of this land carries the breath of birds.

The valleys of **Şirnex, Sêrt, Riha, Amed, Meletî, Xarpêt**, and **Bêdlês** echo at dawn with larks and warblers.
The plains of **Kerkûk, Hewlêr, Slemanî, and Qaradagh** shimmer with swallows and bee-eaters.
The wetlands of **Dukan, Darbandixan, Xorawa, and Rêbar** are painted by herons, storks, flamingos, and kingfishers.
The ancient lands of **Ardalan (Sine), Seqiz, Kirmaşan, Ilam, Luristan, Xoristan, and Baxtiyarî** hold owls, buntings, woodpeckers, and nightingales among oak forests and soft meadows.

Along the mighty rivers — **Aras, Tigris, Euphrates, Great Zab, Little Zab, Sirwan, and Qezwan** — flocks of egrets, cormorants, and sandpipers pass like silver smoke.

From **Neynawa (Nineveh)** to **Tîsfon**, from **Piranshar, Sardasht, Mahabad**, and **Urmê (Urmia)** to the orchards of **Zengiyan, Tewrêz**, and **Baxo**, the birds carry songs older than kings and civilizations. Their melodies have crossed these lands since the time of **Eqbatan**, **Rêy Şar**, **Kewegle**, and **Antiyoc**, long before today's borders divided the Kurdish nation.

In spring, almond, hawthorn, and pomegranate bloom across **Şarazur, Bradost, Botan, Afrin, Mêrdîn, Xarpêt**, and **Çewlîk**.
Here, golden orioles shine like liquid sun, rollers dance in blue spirals, and bee-eaters glide like flying emeralds over fields of barley and wheat.

Summer belongs to power:
Over **Qandîl, Şwankarêy Kurdî, Gara, Qers, Dilok**, and **Artvîn**, the skies are owned by eagles, falcons, and vultures.
The Golden Eagle — **Helo Zêrreî Kurdistanê** — circles like a silent king, watching shepherds guide their flocks across the mountains.
In **Amediya, Akre, Barzan**, and **Rojava's river plains**, kestrels, harriers, and black kites weave patterns of wind and shadow.

Autumn paints **Sine, Mahabad, Kirmaşan**, and **Luristan** in amber, while waves of cranes, storks, and geese cross from **Erzerom and Bayburt** to the wetlands of **Dukan, Darbandixan, Rojhelat**, and **Garmaser**. Their ancient calls echo through the mountains — a sound older than history itself.

Winter, though cold, remains alive.
The snow bunting dances across **Ağrı's white slopes**,
the red-billed chough circles the cliffs of **Amediya**,
and the noble partridge — **kew** — calls out proudly from **Bradost, Hawraman, Colemerg**, and **Şingal**.
Villagers say: *"If you hear the kew in winter, the mountain still has a heartbeat."*

Every bird has a place in Kurdish soul:
The dove brings love,
the raven brings wisdom,
the owl brings watchfulness,
the hoopoe brings divine message,
the crane brings patience,
and the swallow brings hope.

Together they form the living poetry of Kurdistan — a sky that holds the memory, dreams, and freedom of a divided nation. To study the birds of Kurdistan is to read the spirit of our homeland — its resilience, its longing, and its unbroken beauty.
In their wings flies the story of a people who remain graceful, free, and full of song.

## 🦅 1.1- Zrê Zerîn, Helo Zêrre (زرێ زەرین، هەڵۆ زێڕە) — Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

### 🦅 Helo Zêrre — The National Bird of Kurdistan

The Golden Eagle, known in Kurdish as **Zrê Zerîn** or **Helo Zêrre**, is the undisputed ruler of the skies of Kurdistan — a living banner of freedom that circles above the mountains and valleys of the Kurdish homeland. It belongs to every corner of Kurdistan: the rugged peaks of Bakur's **Agirî, Cûdî, and Munzur**, the deep highlands of Rojhilat around **Kirmashan, Loristan, and Hewraman**, and the wide plains of Rojava stretching from **Afrin, Serêkaniyê, and Kobanê** to the ancient lands of **Xerapê (Khirabê)** and **Alapo (Aleppo)**.
In Bashur, it soars over the wild massifs of **Zagros, Şaho, Qandil, Bradost, Garzan, Botan, Gabar, Barzan, Shingal (Sinjar)**, and the towering belts encircling **Wan (Van), Amedi, Duhok, Rawanduz, Penjwen** and beyond.

Among all the great birds of prey in this land, none matches its power or presence. Measuring nearly a meter in length, with a wingspan up to **2.4 meters**, it glides like a shadow carved from sunlight. Females — larger and heavier — may reach **6.5 kilograms**, carrying the full majesty of the mountains in their strong golden bodies. Their name, "**the Golden One**," comes from the sun-coloured feathers on their head and neck, a crown gifted by the sky itself.

Golden Eagles can live **25–30 years in the wild**, and up to **40 years** when protected. They build enormous nests on unreachable cliffs and return to the same sacred ledge year after year, as if honouring an ancestral home. Kurdish shepherds say that "**the eagle remembers the stones where its wings grew**," and indeed, these birds are loyal to their mountains.

Its call — a sharp, whistling **"klee-ee-yaaa!"** — echoes through deep canyons from **Amed, Şirnex**, and the river valleys of **Hewraman**, all the way to the quiet plateaus of **Mêrdîn** and **Qamişlo**. Yet Zrê Zerîn is mostly silent as it soars, speaking instead with the

language of wind and height. Alone, proud, and territorial, it draws vast circles in the sky, rising effortlessly on warm air currents that lift it beyond human reach.

Golden Eagles pair for many years, often for life. In early spring, the female lays **one to three eggs** in the ancestral nest, and both parents share the task of raising their young. The chicks grow strong on the meat of hares, snakes, fox cubs, and mountain birds. When they finally spread their huge wings and take their first flight, the entire mountain seems to hold its breath.

Unlike migratory birds, Zrê Zerîn does not abandon its homeland. Even when snow covers the mountains, it simply descends to lower hills and waits for the storms to pass. It can fly **hundreds of kilometres** in a single day, gliding across peaks, plains, and valleys without flapping its wings for long stretches — a master of the sky.

In Kurdish culture, the Golden Eagle is more than an animal. It is **the spirit of freedom**, the guardian of dignity, the proud symbol of mountains that bow to no one. Many villages tell stories of eagles guiding shepherds in fog, or circling above warriors returning home. To see one overhead is considered a blessing — a reminder that the land is still wild, still alive, still Kurdish.

Today, this noble bird faces many dangers: war and bombardment that shatter ancient nesting cliffs, human persecution, poisoned prey, road construction on high ridges, and the slow changes brought by climate and conflict. Yet in the remote corners of **Zagros, Şaho, Qandil, Bradost, Dersim**, and the volcanic heights of **Serhed**, the Golden Eagle still rules the wind — solitary, unbroken, eternal.

*High above the valleys of Şaho,*
*its wings carve silence into light —*
*the shadow of freedom itself,*
*watching over the land that still remembers its flight.*

## 1.2. Heloî Serîn / Heloyê Serîn (هەڵۆی سەرین / هێلۆی سەرین) — Marsh Harrier (Circus aeruginosus)

**Heloî Serîn — The Marsh Harrier of Kurdistan**

The **Heloî Serîn**, the calm and graceful marsh harrier of Kurdistan, is one of the quietest and most elegant raptors of the Kurdish wetlands. Its name, *Serîn* — "calm, peaceful, serene" — suits it perfectly. It glides low over reeds and still waters, moving like a soft shadow that barely touches the world beneath it. Wherever the lakes and marshes breathe, this bird follows their rhythm.

It is found across the great wetlands of Kurdistan:
the shimmering expanses of **Lake Urmia**, the long calm waters of **Dukan** and **Darbandikhan**, the reedbeds of the **Lower Great Zab**, the marshes of **Khanzad near Hewlêr**, the quiet river valleys of **Rojava**, and the broad water basins of **Hakkari, Van**, and **Botan**.
In all these places, it drifts slowly over the surface, watching, listening, waiting.

Slender and elegant, measuring nearly **half a metre** in length with a wingspan up to **140 cm**, the Heloî Serîn is built for low, light flight. The male is striking, with pale grey wings, a warm brown back, and a creamy head and chest that glow in evening sun. The female, larger and darker, wears deep chocolate feathers with a golden crown and throat that catch the light like fire on the water. Both have piercing yellow eyes — lanterns of the marsh.

The harrier is a quiet hunter, often almost silent, but shepherds around Dukan and Urmia sometimes hear its soft cry — a quick, sharp **"kik-kik-kik"** — carried over the reeds. Most of the time, it communicates through movement: gliding in a shallow V-shape, scanning the water below, then suddenly dropping like a falling leaf onto frogs, insects, small fish, mice, or water birds. Fishermen watching from the shore call it **"the bird that walks on the wind."**

In the warm months of April to June, when reeds grow tall and the wetlands of Kurdistan fill with new life, the Heloî Serîn builds its nest deep inside the reedbeds, hidden from predators and storms. The female lays **three to five pale eggs**, and both parents work tirelessly to feed the chicks. One of the most beautiful sights of the marshlands is the male soaring above the nest, dropping prey mid-air for the female to catch — a silent exchange of devotion.
The young fledge after five to six weeks, and adults may live **eight to twelve years**, returning to the same marshlands every summer.

The Heloî Serîn is a traveller of seasons. It breeds in places like **Urmia, Dukan, Darbandikhan**, and the river deltas of **Rojava**, but many individuals fly south in winter, crossing the plains into Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Africa. In years when the wetlands remain unfrozen, some remain in Kurdistan year-round, gliding over the still water even in the chill of winter mornings.

To Kurdish villagers, this bird has always symbolised **calmness, patience, and quiet guardianship**.
Its peaceful, floating flight at sunrise and sunset has long been noticed by fishermen and shepherds in Urmia, Dukan, Rojava, and Van.
They say:

**“Where Heloî Serîn glides, the water finds rest.”**

Because it hunts rodents and insects, it is seen as a friend to farmers and a gentle keeper of the wetlands.

But the world of the marsh harrier is shrinking. Wetlands across Kurdistan suffer from drought, overuse of water, reedbed destruction, pollution, agricultural expansion, and disturbances during breeding season. Lake Urmia dries further each year, Dukan and Darbandikhan face pollution and water shortage, and many marshes are drained or burned.
Yet the Heloî Serîn continues to circle quietly above what remains, searching for peace in a changing world.

*Among the still reeds it moves unseen,*

*wings whispering over mirrored light —*

*a calm spirit between water and wind.*

## 1.3. Heloî Margir / Heloyê Margir (هەڵۆی مارگر / هەڵۆیە مارگر) — Short-toed Snake Eagle (Circaetus gallicus)

**Heloî Margir — The Snake-Eagle of Kurdistan**

The **Heloî Margir**, the "snake-eating eagle" of Kurdistan, is one of the most impressive and mysterious raptors that rule the wide skies of the Kurdish mountains. It glides above the open highlands and warm valleys of **Rawanduz, Bradost, Amedi, Duhok**, and the ridges of **Hewraman, Shaho**, and the long shoulders of the **Zagros**. Its shadow drifts across the **Soran plains**, the semi-desert plateaus of **Rojava**, and the rocky countryside surrounding **Urmia** and **Mahabad**, where the sun warms the stones and reptiles bask in silence.

Broad-winged and powerful, the Heloî Margir measures **60–70 cm** in length, but its true majesty lies in its wings — stretching **165–185 cm**, wide enough to slow the wind itself. Its plumage is pale underneath with delicate dark streaks, and brownish-grey above, blending with the dry mountainsides. Its fierce yellow eyes shine like drops of burning amber, and its bare, scaled legs mark its ancient specialization: hunting snakes. Among Kurdish raptors, no bird is more fearless in the face of venom.

The Heloî Margir is a solitary guardian, patrolling ridgelines and valleys with steady, silent wings. It rises on warm currents, hovering effortlessly above rocky slopes, circling slowly with unbroken patience. Its voice, a deep mewing whistle — **"piuuuu-waaah"** — echoes across open hills during courtship flights in the spring, a sound that shepherds recognize instantly.
On long, sunny days, villagers often point to a distant shape soaring above the stones and whisper: *"Heloî Margir is hunting today."*

Its diet is a testament to its courage. The bird feeds almost entirely on **snakes**, including venomous vipers, and on large lizards and the occasional small mammal. It is famous for swallowing small snakes whole **while still in mid-air**, a mastery rarely seen

among the raptors of Kurdistan. For this reason, elders in many villages consider it a protector of farmland and shepherd routes — a bird that keeps the land safe from hidden dangers slithering below.

When April warms the earth, the Heloî Margir chooses a quiet nesting place — either a tall oak or pine, or a cliff ledge untouched by human footsteps. The female lays a single white egg, and together the pair guards the nest with great devotion. After **70–80 days**, the chick takes its first trembling flight, but remains with its parents for weeks, learning the delicate balance of wind, sunlight, and the deadly dance with snakes. In the wild, these eagles live **15–20 years**, carrying the memory of countless summers.

The Heloî Margir is a partial migrant. Many return to Kurdistan from March to October for breeding, filling the skies of **Amedi, Garmian, Rojava**, and the western Zagros. Others remain year-round in warmer regions. Its flight is one of the purest beauties of Kurdish nature — broad wings steady as mountains, long glides over deep valleys, sudden vertical dives into sun-baked stones, where a serpent lies unaware.

For generations, Kurdish shepherds and travelers have known this eagle as the guardian of warm rocks. They have watched it circling above snake-filled slopes, warning them of danger and clearing paths where feet may tread. In old stories, the Heloî Margir is said to watch over lonely travelers, a silent companion in harsh wilderness.

But even this brave hunter faces modern threats: deforestation of oak forests in **Hawraman** and **Amedi**, the loss of nesting cliffs, electrocution from power lines, disturbance during breeding seasons, and the decline of reptiles due to heavy pesticide use. Still, its silhouette remains one of the most powerful symbols of untamed land. Above the valleys of **Rawanduz, Bradost, and Amedi**, the shadow of the Heloî Margir is a reminder that ancient guardians still live among the mountains.

*Above the silent stones it glides,*
*eyes bright as desert suns —*
*the hunter of serpents,*
*the watcher of wind.*

## 🦅 1.4. Bazê Reş, Bazî Reş (بازی ڕەش / بازێ ڕەش) — Buzzard / Large Hawk (Buteo buteo)

**Bazê Reş – The Black Hawk**

The **Bazê Reş**, the "Black Hawk" of Kurdistan, is one of the most majestic and commanding spirits of the Kurdish sky. Broad-winged, powerful, and endlessly calm, it circles above the long ridges of Zagros, the cliffs of Qandil, the valleys of Botan, and the open plains of Rojava. Its shadow sweeps across the Duhok ranges, the Amed highlands, the Silemani foothills, and the mountains of Wan and Şengal — a silent guardian moving with the rhythm of wind and stone.

Standing nearly half a meter tall with wings spreading 110–140 cm, it carries the authority of an ancient raptor. Its plumage shifts from pale brown to dark chocolate, with creamy or lightly streaked underparts, and eyes the colour of golden hazel that sharpen in the Kurdish sunlight like polished amber. Bazê Reş lives 15–20 years, returning to the same cliffs and high ledges season after season, as if tied to the mountains by memory.

This hawk is a master of patience.
It rises slowly on warm currents, circling high above the land, watching every movement below with powerful stillness. When the moment comes, it dives with silent speed, cutting the wind like a blade. Its call — a ringing *"piyaaahh!"* — travels across entire valleys. Kurdish shepherds call it *"the voice of the mountains."*

It moves with a strength that never rushes.
Soaring, gliding, watching.
A study in calm determination.

Bazê Reş hunts small mammals, lizards, large insects, and at times smaller birds — its presence a sign that the mountain ecosystem still breathes with life.

In spring, pairs return to their long-kept nests, reinforcing old platforms of sticks, wool, and grasses high on cliffs or tall trees overlooking vast valleys. They lay 2–4 eggs, white and faintly marked, and defend their young with fierce loyalty. The chicks grow quickly, standing at the cliff edge, testing the wind, learning the art of courage before taking their first uncertain glide into open sky.

Its flight is unmistakable — wings held in a shallow "V," long feathers spread like fingers, steady gliding that seems to command the very air.
Though many remain year-round in Zagros, Qandil, Amed, and Botan, some drift south in winter toward the warm Mesopotamian plains. Their migrations are short, guided by food, not fear.

Bazê Reş is woven deeply into Kurdish life.
Shepherds see it at dawn patrolling the grazing lands.
Travellers watch it circle lonely hills.
Villagers notice its silhouette resting on a single tall tree, surveying the world with quiet authority.

In Kurdish memory and folklore, the Black Hawk symbolises:

• dignity
• independence
• sharp vision
• wisdom and strength
• freedom without limits

They say its wings "carry the spirit of the mountains," and when it glides, the sky itself seems to follow.

But even this ancient guardian faces threats:
construction eating into wild cliffs, rodent poisons that harm it, disturbance of nesting sites, illegal hunting, road accidents, and the scars of war across open plains.

Yet still it rises —
steady, patient, unstoppable —
a living echo of the mountains' heartbeat.

High above the mountain wind,
it turns without a sound —
the sky itself bends
to follow its shadow.

## 🦅 1.5. Şêre Baz / Şêrkew / Baz (شێرە باز / شێرکەو) — Osprey / Sea Hawk (Pandion haliaetus)

**Şêre Baz – The Hawk Lion of the Waters**

The **Şêre Baz**, meaning *Hawk Lion* or *Hawk of the Waters* in Kurdish, is one of the most striking spirits of Kurdistan's lakes and rivers. It circles the blue mirrors of Dukan, Darbandikhan, Wan (Van), and Urmia; glides above the waters of Mahabad and Xanê; sweeps over the wetlands of Amed and Rojava; and follows the ancient paths of the Tigris, Sirwan, and Little Zab. Wherever water gathers in wide stillness, Şêre Baz writes its shadow across the surface.

Large and noble, it measures nearly sixty centimetres in length, with wings stretching one and a half metres wide — long and powerful like the arms of a mountain wind. Its plumage blends brown upperparts with clear white below, a bold dark stripe crossing its golden eyes. Those eyes, bright and fierce, scan the water with a warrior's calm. Its talons are extraordinary: reversible, curved, able to grasp slippery fish better than any other bird. Şêre Baz is built for the water-world, created for precision, strength, and grace.

Its voice is a high, ringing whistle —
**"cheep-cheep-yewk!"**
echoing across lakes at sunrise and sunset. The call is sharp and clean, like the breath of dawn cutting through stillness.

The Şêre Baz hunts with unmatched mastery. It hovers above the water, holding itself motionless against the wind, then drops like a thrown spear — feet-first, striking the surface with explosive power. When it rises again, a fish gleams in its talons, quickly turned head-first to slice through the air in perfect alignment. It hunts alone, in long silent watches, as if meditating on the water's movements.

Although many ospreys in Kurdistan are migratory, some pairs return to the same nest year after year, weaving their history into cliff ledges, high trees, power towers, and lakeside rocks. They lay two or three eggs on a large platform of sticks, repairing and expanding the nest each spring. They live fifteen to twenty years, loyal to their home, their mate, and the water that sustains them.

Şêre Baz is a great traveller of the sky. It comes to Kurdistan in March and departs by October, flying south toward Arabia, East Africa, Sudan, and the warm wetlands of the Gulf. Its silhouette is unmistakable — long bent wings, steady beats followed by smooth glides, a warrior of wind crossing mountains, rivers, and seas.

This bird has inspired Kurdish fishermen, shepherds, and storytellers for generations. People watch it glide above the dams of Dukan and Darbandikhan, perch on quiet wooden posts, or circle over slow, deep pools. In Kurdish culture, Şêre Baz symbolises **freedom**, **courage**, **clarity of vision**, and the **power of renewal**. Its ability to strike, fall, disappear beneath the water, and rise again shining is seen as a lesson in resilience — a reminder that strength comes from returning, not merely from surviving.

Yet its world grows more fragile each year. The Şêre Baz suffers from polluted rivers, poisoned fish, disturbed nesting sites, electrocution on powerlines, plastic waste drifting in wetlands, and the shrinking of Kurdistan's great waters through dams and climate pressure. Even so, it returns each spring, hovering like a spirit above river breath — the eagle born from the water itself.

Eyes of the sun,
claws of lightning —
it hunts not from hunger,
but from grace.

## 🦅 1.6. Bazî Laq Drêj / Baza Ling Drêj (بازی لاق درێژ / بازه لاق دریژه) — Long-legged Buzzard (Buteo rufinus)

**Bazî Laq Drêj — The Long-Legged Hawk of Kurdistan**

The **Bazî Laq Drêj**, the "long-legged hawk," is one of the grandest and most commanding raptors of Kurdistan. It glides above the wide mountains, deep canyons, and wind-shaped plateaus of **Şaho, Hewraman, and Kermashan**, ruling the open sky with a presence both ancient and alive. It is found across all four parts of the Kurdish homeland — circling over **Qandil**, drifting above the high ridges of **Zagros** and **Botan**, scanning the valleys of **Amedi, Bradost, Duhok, Soran**, and shining against the stones of **Afrin, Mêrdîn, Rojava**, and the slopes around **Wan, Hakkarî, Sine, Urmia**, and **Mahabad**. It also crosses the seasonal wind roads of **Xaneqîn, Slemani, Koya, Dersim, Munzur, Garzan, Bingol**, and sometimes the migration channels toward **Basra (Xerapê)** and **Alapo**.

This impressive hawk measures **55–65 cm**, with wings that spread **150–160 cm**, carrying a body of **1–1.5 kg** built for endurance. Its feathers shift from pale sand to rich rufous brown, colours that mirror the Kurdish hillsides and sun-burnt valleys. With sharp amber eyes, it hunts lizards, snakes, hares, ground birds, and large insects, moving across rugged terrain with a patience known only to the mountains themselves.

Its cry — a loud, piercing *"piii-yaa!"* — breaks across cliffs and terraces, calling from Şaho's stone heart to the high ridges of Botan and the cold heights of Dersim. It soars silently on broad thermals, drawing wide circles above the earth, gliding for hours without flapping. From a distance, with its long wings and steady posture, people often mistake it for a young eagle. It rests on high rocks, ancient trees, and abandoned towers, watching over the land with calm, resolute vigilance.

In spring, the Bazî Laq Drêj seeks the cliffs it has known since birth — the rugged walls of **Şaho and Hewraman**, the stony ridges of **Amedi, Kermashan, Qandil**, and the

remote highlands stretching into **Sine, Mahabad, and Luristan**. Its nest is a great platform of sticks built into rock ledges, safe from predators and storms. The female lays **2–4 pale eggs**, and both parents guard them fiercely, returning year after year to the same ancient place. These hawks live **20–25 years**, their lives written into the cliffs they inhabit.

The Bazî Laq Drêj is partially migratory. In southern regions — Qandil, Zagros, Botan — it remains through all seasons. In the colder north — Wan, Serhed, Dersim — it drifts southward during winter, following wind roads that shepherds know by memory. Young birds travel far, exploring the skies of Rojava, Kirkuk, and Luristan before settling into their own territories.

In Kurdish life, this hawk has long been a creature of respect. Shepherds from Şaho to Botan believed it protected flocks from wolves and warned travellers of approaching storms. When seen circling high, it was a sign of **good fortune, courage, vigilance, and ancestral guardianship**. In Hewraman, elders say that when its cry rings through dawn — *"piyaa!"* — the mountains themselves awaken.

But even this strong raptor faces modern dangers. Cliffs are carved away by quarrying. Power lines in Duhok and parts of Rojava strike migrating birds. Prey animals disappear where land is overgrazed. Nesting cliffs in Amedi, Hakkarî, and Sine are disturbed by war, construction, or human activity. Yet despite all this, the Bazî Laq Drêj still holds the Kurdish sky — a sentinel of the highlands, a guardian of the wind.

**Over Şaho's rugged heart you fly,**
**your wings carving the wind —**
**the mountains call you brother,**
**and the valleys echo your cry.**

## 🦅 1.7. Başûe Barîke (باشووه باریکه) — Kestrel / Small Falcon (*Falco tinnunculus*)

**Başû – The Wind-Speed Falcon of Kurdistan**

The **Başûe Barîke**, meaning *"the wind-speed"* in Kurdish, is the small but fierce falcon whose presence defines the skies of Kurdistan. From the snowy cliffs of Qandil and Dersim to the warm plains of Rojava and Kirkuk, from the ridges of Soran and Hawraman to the wide valleys around Amed and the Wan basin, this bird circles above the land like a restless spirit. Every Kurdish shepherd knows the sight: a tiny falcon hanging motionless in the wind, wings unmoving, eyes fixed on the earth.

Başûe Barîke is elegant and sharp, measuring only 32–38 cm, yet it carries the strength of the mountains. The males show a blue-grey head and chestnut back, while the larger females wear mottled brown, blending perfectly with rocky hills. Light and agile, they live 12–15 years, thriving around cliffs, stony valleys, orchards, ruined towers, and the semi-desert plains that stretch across all parts of Kurdistan.

Its voice is a quick, piercing *"klee-klee-klee!"*, cutting through the quiet of highlands and ridges. But its behaviour is what makes the Başûe Barîke unforgettable: it hovers in place as if pinned to the sky, then drops like a blade toward a mouse, lizard, or large insect. Loyal mates stay together for life, patrolling the same territory each morning, moving with a confidence born from centuries of wind and stone.

When spring arrives, kestrels return to their chosen cliffs or towers, laying 3–6 eggs in rock crevices, old crow nests, tree hollows, or ruined walls. They build no nest of their own — they simply reclaim what the land offers. Both parents stand guard fiercely, teaching their young the ancient art of hovering, diving, and reading the wind.

Many Başûe Barîke remain in Kurdistan through winter, especially in the warm plains of Hewlêr, Duhok, and the Sirwan basin. Others follow the season southward, returning

with the first soft winds of March. Their flight is fast, precise, and beautifully controlled, shaped by the rugged mountains they call home.

Kestrels live close to Kurdish life. They follow shepherd routes, circle village farms, and glide over wheat fields and orchards. Farmers welcome them as natural protectors, for they keep the land free of mice and harmful insects. In Kurdish stories and proverbs, Başû symbolizes **bravery, precision, loyalty, and the untamed heart of the mountains**, a guardian who fears nothing that walks the earth.

Yet even this strong bird faces threats — pesticides that kill its prey, war damage that destroys cliffs, expanding cities that erase nesting sites, and powerlines that cut across its flight paths. Still, its cry continues to echo over the ridges of Kurdistan, sharp and defiant, as if reminding the land that freedom still has wings.

High above the fields it hovers,
a dagger against the wind —
silent, fierce, and free,
the guardian of the mountains.

## 🦅 1.8. Hêlbaz / Helbaz / Hêlbazê Şer (هێلبازی شەر / هەلباز / هێلباز) — Falcon (general name for hunting falcons) (Falco spp.)

**Hêlbaz — The Falcon of Kurdistan**

The **Hêlbaz**, one of the most respected and powerful birds of the Kurdish sky, is a creature woven deeply into the land's memory. From the plains of **Erbil, Kirkuk, Garmian, and Halabja** to the high peaks of **Şaho, Zagros, Qandil, Hawraman, and Botan**, and across the valleys of **Duhok, Amedi, Zakho**, and the plateaus of **Amed, Şırnex, Hakkarî, and Wan**, the falcon traces its sharp shadow across every region of Kurdistan. It also watches over the open skies of **Afrin, Kobanê, Serêkaniyê, Qamishlo**, and the mountains of **Mahabad, Urmia, Sine, Kirmashan, and Ilam** — a true master of all four parts of the Kurdish homeland.

Falcons vary in size and form, but all share the same unmistakable grace: a long, pointed wing, an aerodynamic body built for speed, and eyes framed by fierce black markings like teardrops of war paint. Most stand **30–50 cm** tall, with wings spreading **70–120 cm**, and weigh **500–1200 grams** — light enough for flight, strong enough for the hunt. The famed **Hêlbazê Şîn**, the Peregrine Falcon, is a living legend, capable of diving through the air at more than **300 km/h**, making it the fastest animal on earth. In the desert regions of **Kirkuk, Garmian, and Şengal**, falcons wear sandy-brown feathers that mirror the land; in the mountains of **Qandil, Botan, and Wan**, they carry cool grey and blue tones that blend with rock and sky.

Kurdish life has long admired the falcon's presence. Standing on a high cliff, the Hêlbaz watches its territory with a sharpness that seems almost supernatural. Its call — a piercing **"kee-kee-kee!"** — echoes through the canyons of **Şaho, Qandil, Rawanduz**, and **Botan**, a cry of dominance that every creature below understands. It is fearless when defending its nesting cliffs, loyal to the same ledges year after year, and hunts with a precision that feels like a sword cutting through the air. One Kurdish saying declares, *"When the Hêlbaz circles the sky, every creature knows its place."*

Its nests are built on inaccessible cliffs or ancient rock towers, and sometimes in abandoned crow nests on tall trees. In spring, the female lays **two to four eggs**, and both parents guard their young with unwavering courage. The chicks grow rapidly, practicing short fluttering flights by the sixth week, soon becoming the sharp-winged hunters that have inspired Kurdish imagination for centuries.

Some falcons stay in Kurdistan all year, especially those in the rugged heights of **Qandil, Botan, Şaho**, and the Zagros mountain chain. Others travel with the seasons, gliding through the skies of **Rojava, Duhok, and Wan** as they move between Asia, Africa, and Europe. Their flight is a rare blend of raw power and perfect discipline — the very embodiment of freedom.

The relationship between the Hêlbaz and the Kurdish people is ancient and deep. Falcons were companions of warriors, symbols of kingship, and a mark of honour among tribal leaders. The phrase **"çavê hêlbaz"** — *the eyes of a falcon* — is one of the highest compliments in Kurdish language, praising a person's wisdom, clarity, and insight. Traditional falconry was once a noble art among tribes of **Botan, Şengal, Amedi, and Hawraman**, where falcons were trained with patience, respect, and deep understanding.

But even this mighty bird has not escaped the pressures of the modern world.
Cliff blasting, pesticides, the poisoning of rodents, illegal hunting, and smuggling for falconry have endangered many populations. War has scarred the mountains where falcons once nested safely, and the decline of small birds — their main prey — has added new challenges.

Still, in the untouched skies of **Qandil, Şaho, Botan, and Wan**, the Hêlbaz continues to rise on the wind, carving circles above the mountains with the confidence of a true guardian of the Kurdish sky.

*You rise above all mountains,*
*heart of the wind —*

*your eyes see tomorrow*

*before the dawn arrives.*

## 1.9. Şahîn / Şahîna Şer / Şahînê Kurdî / Şahîna Zinarî

## (شاهین / شاهینه شەر / شاهینێ کوردی / شاهینه زینارى) — Peregrine Falcon (Falco peregrinus

**Şahîn — The Falcon of the Kurdish Sky**

The **Şahîn**, the Peregrine Falcon of Kurdistan, is one of the most honoured and revered creatures of the mountains — a symbol of speed, courage, precision, and unbreakable freedom. It lives where the land rises into stone and wind: across the steep walls of **Şaho and Hawraman**, the highlands of **Amedi and Duhok**, the mighty cliffs of **Bradost and Rawanduz**, and the endless ridges of **Qandil and the Zagros range**. Its shadow crosses the rocky escarpments of **Rojava**, glides over the deep canyons of **Botan and Amed**, and sweeps through the ancient sky-paths above **Van**.

Built for the heavens, the Şahîn is a marvel of creation — sleek, muscular, and perfect in form. Its upper body carries a blue-grey shimmer like polished steel, while the underparts are pale cream with delicate dark barring. A fierce black stripe falls beneath each eye, like the mark of a warrior, and its deep black eyes flash with yellow rings that seem to hold the whole horizon inside them. In size it is powerful yet elegant, measuring nearly half a meter from beak to tail, with a wingspan that reaches more than a meter. The female, larger and more dominant, often rules the high cliffs with regal authority.

But it is in flight where the Şahîn becomes legend. When it folds its wings and drops from the sky in the hunting dive — the famous stoop — it becomes the fastest animal on earth, plunging through the air at **320 km per hour**, striking its prey with a precision no other creature can match. Pigeons, doves, and swift-flying birds stand little chance once the falcon commits to the chase. It scans the world from impossible heights, calculates wind and distance in a single heartbeat, and dives like a living arrow, created from speed and intent.

Across the Kurdish mountains, its sharp ringing cry — **“kek-kek-kek!”** — echoes between the cliffs. In the highlands of **Şaho, Amedi, Bradost, Qandil, and the Zagros**, shepherds know this sound well. For generations, they have watched the silhouette of the Şahîn circling above their flocks, saying that when the falcon flies, **“the mountains breathe freely.”**

When spring warms Kurdistan, the Şahîn returns to its ancestral ledges. It does not bother with nests of branches but chooses a simple hollow or ledge carved naturally into the cliffs — the kind found on the limestone walls of **Amedi**, the deep canyons of **Rawanduz**, the gorges of **Hawraman**, and the remote cliffs of **Bradost**. There the female lays three or four reddish-brown eggs, guarding them fiercely with her mate. When the chicks hatch, their training begins: play-chases, aerial lessons, and the first fearless dives that will one day make them masters of the sky.

Many Şahîn remain in Kurdistan year-round, especially in the milder climates of **Amedi, Duhok, Rojava**, and **Hawraman**. Others drift southward during harsh winters, while the northern falcons of **Amed, Van, and Botan** migrate shorter distances until the cold retreats. Yet wherever the Şahîn goes, it returns — guided by mountains, memory, and the invisible paths of the wind.

For Kurds, the falcon holds a place deeper than nature. Princes, chieftains, and riders once trained the Şahîn for falconry, treating it as a partner rather than a tool. Its image appears in poetry, stories, and proverbs — a symbol of nobility, vision, loyalty, and clarity of purpose. To call someone **“çavê şahîn”** — falcon-eyed — is to honour their wisdom and strength. Warriors looked to the Şahîn as a companion, and many Kurdish tales speak of falcons guiding travellers or delivering messages from the unseen world.

Though the Peregrine Falcon nearly vanished globally in the last century due to deadly pesticides, it has returned strongly in many places. Yet in Kurdistan it still faces danger: disturbance of cliff nests, illegal trapping, poisoned prey, quarry blasting, and the steady bite of development into the wild ridges of **Amedi, Hawraman**, and **Rojava**. Still, the Şahîn endures.

It continues to ride the wind with unmatched grace, a living emblem of Kurdish mountains — the silent ruler of the open sky.

*On the wind's edge it reigns —*
*swift as thought,*
*fierce as freedom,*
*the shadow that strikes the sky.*

## 1.10. Dalaşî Berdawar (دالاشی بەرداوەر) — Egyptian Vulture (Neophron percnopterus)

**Dalaşî Berdawar — The White Guardian of Kurdistan**

The **Dalaşî Berdawar**, the ancient white vulture of Kurdistan, is one of the most sacred birds of the Kurdish mountains — a quiet, noble presence that has lived beside shepherds, temples, and forgotten ruins for thousands of years. Once common across the rocky plateaus of **Sinjar, Gara, Amedi**, the wild cliffs of **Rawanduz, Bradost, Penjwin**, the sacred valleys of **Hawraman and Qandil**, and the high ranges of **Hakkari, Şırnak, and Van**, it now survives only in remote places where time still moves slowly and the mountains guard their secrets.

With its white plumage tipped in black, its long, slender wings measuring up to **170 cm**, and its bright yellow face glowing like gold in the sun, the Berdêwer is a bird that cannot be mistaken for any other. It walks with delicate steps, elegant and thoughtful, its pointed beak perfectly shaped for the work it was born to do. Unlike other birds of prey, the Dalaşî Berdêwer does not kill.
It cleans.
It purifies.
It returns balance to the land by feeding only on what is already dead.

Because of this ancient role, Kurdish shepherds call it **“the purifier of the mountains.”** They say it carries sorrow away, lifting impurity from the land so new life can grow.

Although mostly silent, it sometimes greets its partner with a soft creaking call — **“kree-eee”** — a faint sound that drifts through cliffs and ruins. It glides alone or in pairs over canyons, old villages, sacred hills, and river valleys, searching for carcasses, bones, or eggs. Incredibly, the Berdêwer is one of the few birds on earth that uses **tools**: it lifts stones with its beak and drops them onto eggs to break them open — a sign of ancient intelligence that once amazed the world’s earliest naturalists.

Each spring, the pair returns faithfully to the same cliff ledge or cave, often a place untouched by human hands for centuries. They build their nest from wool, straw, cloth scraps, and hair gathered from the land — a humble cradle where the female lays two pale white eggs. The chicks hatch covered in white down, their yellow faces slowly emerging as they grow. They remain in the nest for nearly three months, learning from their parents how to glide between cliffs and how to survive in a world where danger grows each year.

When autumn comes and the mountains cool, the Helloi Berdawar rises into the sky and begins its long journey south. It is one of Kurdistan's great travellers, leaving the cliffs of **Gara, Bradost, Penjwin, Hawraman**, and **Hakkari** to winter in the warm lands of **Africa, Arabia, and Ethiopia**, returning again when the Zagros valleys bloom in late March. Its flight is slow, steady, and full of grace — long, deep wingbeats followed by gentle gliding on the warm winds rising from the rocks.

For the Kurdish people, the Helloi Berdawar has always been a sacred figure.
It appears in ancient tales, in folk beliefs, and in the memory of old shepherds. To see it circling overhead was once a blessing — a sign of purity, protection, and the quiet presence of divine guardianship. In the deep past of Mesopotamia and Egypt, it was carved into temples, honoured as a symbol of rebirth, the watcher of sacred altars, the carrier of the soul from darkness into light.
Among Kurdish elders, harming a Dalaşî Berdêwer was considered a sin.

But today, this ancient guardian stands on the edge of disappearance. Poisoned carcasses meant for wolves, electrocution from power lines, shrinking grasslands, declining herds, and the destruction of remote valleys have pushed the Dalaşî Berdêwer toward silence. Only a handful of pairs remain — hiding in the wild heart of **Mount Gara**, the cliffs of **Bradost** and **Rawanduz**, the deep ravines of **Qandil**, the border mountains of **Hakkari–Şırnak**, and the lonely sacred lands of **Sinjar** and **Hawraman**.

Yet even now, conservation efforts and village traditions offer hope — feeding sites, education, and the protection of nesting cliffs. If these efforts continue, the Dalaşî

Berdêwer may still survive, still rise above the Zagros winds, still bless the land as it has since the dawn of Kurdish history.

*White wings over the bones of time,*
*circling in silence —*
*a ghost of purity,*
*a keeper of forgotten altars.*

## 🦅 1.11. Dalaşî Gewre / Dalaşê Mezin (دالاشی گەورە / دالاشی مەزن) — Griffon Vulture (Gyps fulvus)

**Dalaşî Gewre – The Great Vulture of Kurdistan**

The **Dalaşî Gewre**, known across Kurdistan as the great vulture of the mountains, is one of the largest and most commanding birds to rule the region's skies. It inhabits the rugged cliffs of Qandil, Zagros, Botan, and Hawraman, and drifts above the long ridges of Dersim, Soran, Barzan, Şengal, and the high valleys of Amed and Rojhilat. Riding rising mountain winds, it moves with a stillness that feels ancient, as if carved from the sky itself.

Enormous in size and presence, the Dalaşî Gewre reaches nearly a meter in body length, and its wings spread wider than the height of two grown men. Its plumage ranges from pale brown to tawny gold. A long, pale neck rises to a bare cream-coloured head, crowned by a sharp, hooked beak made for its timeless work. Living up to forty years or more, the Dalaşî Gewre moves slowly and silently between its cliff colonies and the open feeding grounds of Kurdistan.

Unlike hawks and eagles, the Dalaşî Gewre is not a hunter. It is a pure scavenger — a cleaner of the land. Feeding on the remains of dead animals, it prevents disease, restores balance, and returns nutrients to the mountain soil. Its rough, low voice is seldom heard except during feeding disputes, a deep *kraaahh* rolling through the cliffs. With extraordinary eyesight, it searches vast distances, gliding for hours without a single wingbeat. Calm, patient, and peaceful, it belongs to the oldest rhythm of nature.

High on inaccessible cliffs, far from human disturbance, the Dalaşî Gewre raises its young. Each year a pair produces just one large white egg. Both parents share the duty of incubation, taking long, careful turns. The chick grows slowly, needing many months of feeding before it becomes strong enough to glide into the wind. Because they raise only one young per year, their numbers recover very slowly after any loss.

The Dalaşî Gewre is one of the finest gliders in the world. It uses thermal currents to climb higher and higher, wings held steady like a great brown sail. From these heights it circles silently over valleys, rarely flapping, letting the wind carry it as if it were a living piece of the sky. Most individuals remain in Kurdistan throughout the year, though some wander widely across the Zagros and into the Mesopotamian plains during winter. Its flight — vast, effortless, and free — has long been a symbol of patience and endurance in Kurdish imagination.

High above the broken cliffs,
it sails without a sound —
keeper of silence,
shadow of eternity's wing.

## 🦉 1.12- Kundê Şevê / Bôk/ Kund (کوند) — Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

The Barn Owl, known in Kurdish as **Kund**, the *"Bird of the Night,"* is one of the most mysterious and graceful creatures of Kurdistan. It glides silently across all parts of the homeland — from the shadowy ruins of **Şengal**, the orchards of **Botan**, and the farmlands of **Rojava**, to the quiet villages and rolling fields of **Ilam**. Wherever there are old houses, ancient stones, or lonely barns under the moonlight, Kund makes its home.

Slender and pale, measuring **33–39 cm** with a wingspan of **85–95 cm**, it carries a presence both gentle and haunting. Its heart-shaped white face, framed by soft feathers, seems carved from moonlight itself, while its black eyes shine like deep wells of night. When it flies, its wings make no sound — not even a whisper — giving it the reputation of a wandering spirit among Kurdish villagers.

Kund hunts in darkness, gliding like a ghost over fields and orchards to catch mice, insects, and small reptiles. For generations, Kurdish farmers have loved this bird, calling it *"the silent guardian of grain,"* for it protects wheat and barley stores without anyone seeing its work. It lives **5–10 years**, roosting in hollow trees, abandoned homes, old barns, stone towers, and the cool mouths of mountain caves. Many Kurdish families speak of seeing its pale shape slip quietly past rooftops just before dawn.

Its voice, unlike the songs of other birds, is a long, chilling hiss or shriek — **"kreeeaaaah!"** — rising over farmlands and rocky valleys. In old times, villagers believed this eerie call was a warning of unseen danger, or a message sent by wandering spirits. Others believed that Kund guided travellers who lost their way at night, appearing suddenly on a rooftop or tree branch before disappearing again into darkness. To this day, many Kurds feel a mix of awe and respect when its cry cuts through the silence.

Despite its secretive nature, Kund lives close to people. It circles above **quiet orchards**, watches from the beams of **old barns**, and rests inside **abandoned houses**, following the rhythm of Kurdish village life just as it has for centuries. Farmers welcome

it for its fierce appetite for pests, knowing that one owl can clear an entire field of rodents.

But like many creatures of the night, Kund faces threats. Modern construction destroys old barns where it once nested. Hollow trees are cut down. Pesticides poison the insects and mice it depends on. Road traffic claims many birds that hunt too close to headlights. And as villages expand, the quiet places the owl loves disappear year by year.

Still — the Kund endures.
On moonlit nights above the plains of Botan, on the silent roofs of Rojava, in the ruins of old Ilam, and the fields that stretch toward Şengal, it continues to float across the darkness like a soft breath of the mountains. A spirit of the Kurdish night, watching over the land long after humans have fallen asleep.

*Between the ruins and the moon,*
*it flies without sound —*
*a white ghost of the mountains,*
*whispering secrets to the night.*

## 1.13. Kunde Şaxe (کوندە شاخە) — Little Owl (Athene noctua)

**Kunde Şaxe — The Little Owl of Kurdistan**

The **Kunde Şaxe**, the Little Owl of Kurdistan, is a quiet guardian of the Kurdish night — a small, solemn bird that sits on the rooftops of stone villages, among fig and olive trees, or on the ancient walls of forgotten ruins as if watching over the dreams of the valleys below. Its name, “Bird of the Night,” reflects its calm, moonlit spirit. Though only **22–27 cm** long and weighing barely **150–200 grams**, it carries an aura far greater than its size: mottled brown and beige plumage blending into old stone, a flat-topped head, and fierce golden eyes that glow under the starlit sky.

The Kunde Şaxe lives across every region of Kurdistan. In Bashûr, it watches from the houses of **Amedi, Zakho, Duhok, Akre**, and the orchards around **Erbil, Shaqlawa, Soran**, and **Rawanduz**. It is equally at home in **Kirkuk, Garmiyan, Kalar, Kifri**, and the warm valleys of **Halabja, Penjwen**, and **Chamchamal**. In Rojhilat, it moves silently among the stone villages of **Hawraman, Paveh, Merîwan**, and through the rolling hills of **Sine, Kirmashan, Ilam**, and **Luristan**. It roosts in orchards and farmlands near **Mahabad, Urmia**, **Asnav, Bane**, and **Piranshar**.
In Bakur, it watches from cliffs and rooftops of **Hakkari, Colemêrg, Şırnak, Botan**, and among the quiet evenings of **Wan, Bitlis, Agirî**, **Mêrdîn, Diyarbakir, Batman**, and **Siirt**. And in Rojava, it calls softly from the fig trees of **Afrin, Shiye, Cindirês**, and from the edges of **Kobanê, Manbij, Derik**, and **Qamislo**.

Wherever Kurds have built their homes — from mountain villages to arid plains — the Little Owl has settled with them, a companion of both solitude and community.

It prefers places shaped by both nature and human hands: old stone walls warmed by the sun, fig and olive groves buzzing with insects, abandoned farmhouses with hollow beams, low cliffs near grazing lands, and centuries-old ruins half reclaimed by dust. Often it is seen gently bobbing its head — a curious, watchful gesture — before it slips into the shadows to hunt.

At dusk, when the last light fades behind the mountains, the Kunde Şaxe awakens. It hunts silently, dropping from its perch as softly as falling snow. Insects, mice, beetles, geckos, small lizards — all become part of its nightly harvest. Its voice is a gentle, melancholic **“koo-koo… koo-koo…”**, drifting through quiet Kurdish nights like the note of a distant reed flute. For many villagers, hearing its soft call is comforting, a sign that night has settled peacefully.

Though small, this owl is wise in the Kurdish imagination. It is seen as a watcher, an ancient spirit living between ruin and moonlight. Elders say the Kunde Şaxe remembers the old stories, sitting on the same stones that held kings, shepherds, dervishes, and wanderers. Some believe it protects orchards and homes from harmful spirits, while others see it as a symbol of patience, mystery, and quiet endurance.

Today, the Little Owl continues to live beside Kurdish families, ignoring wars, migrations, and the passing of centuries. It sits where it always has — on fig trees, on broken walls, on the edge of night — a small but eternal piece of the land.

*In the fig tree’s hollow heart,*
*it waits for moonlight —*
*eyes of gold,*
*keeper of silence,*
*friend of the forgotten walls*.

## 1.14. Bûbûk / Kunde Gewre (بووبووک / کوندە گەورە) — Eurasian Eagle-Owl (Bubo bubo)

**Bûbûk — The Great Owl of Kurdistan**

The **Bûbûk**, the mighty Eagle-Owl of Kurdistan, is the undisputed ruler of the Kurdish night — a colossal, silent hunter whose deep, thunderous hoots roll across the mountains like distant drums of the earth. Known also as **Şêxê Şevê** ("Sheikh of the Night"), **Pîrê Şevê** ("Elder of the Night"), and in some villages **Bûkebûk**, it is a creature wrapped in ancient mystery. Its fiery orange eyes glow like embers beneath the moon, its feathered horns stand like a crown of shadows, and its broad wings move with a silence that feels supernatural.

The Bûbûk is among the largest owls on earth — **60–75 cm** long, with wings stretching nearly **2 meters** across, and a weight reaching **4 kilograms**. Its plumage of tawny gold, black, and streaked brown vanishes into Kurdish cliffs as if the bird were carved from stone. One glance from this owl feels ancient and wise — the gaze of a spirit that has watched Kurdistan for thousands of years.

It lives throughout the homeland.
In **Başûr**, it roams the cliffs of **Hawraman, Penjwen, Soran, Choman**, the forests and gorges of **Amedi, Barzan, Rawanduz, Bradost**, and the stony heights of **Duhok, Zakho, Akre**, and **Shaqlawa**. It echoes across **Kirkuk**, the plains of **Kalar and Garmiyan**, and the cliffs of **Dukan** and **Darbandikhan**.
In **Rojhilat**, its hoots drift through **Merîwan, Paveh**, and the steep walls of **Shaho**, moving through **Sine, Kirmashan, Ilam**, and the rough Zagros spines of **Luristan, Asnav, Bane, Mahabad**, and the **Urmia Mountains**.
In **Bakur**, it rules the remote regions of **Hakkari, Colemêrg, Şırnak, Cizîr, Botan**, from the volcanic ridges of **Wan, Bitlis, Agirî**, to **Qers, Erzîrom**, and the ancient cities of **Mêrdîn, Diyarbakir, Batman**, and **Siirt**.

In **Rojava**, it watches from the cliffs of **Afrin, Cindirês, Shiye, Raco**, and the rocky hills around **Kobanê, Manbij, Qamislo**, and **Derik**.

Wherever cliffs rise high and human footsteps fade into silence, the Bûbûk presides — a king of the night.

It dwells in places untouched by time: high mountain walls, deep gorges, old forests, abandoned ruins, cave mouths, and the great boulders scattered across remote valleys. It avoids busy human lands, needing wide hunting territories where it can move unseen.

Its diet is that of a true apex predator — hares, rats, voles, crows, hedgehogs, pigeons, even vipers and, on rare occasions, young foxes. Its flight is so silent that many shepherds say "the Bûbûk passes like a spirit — only the prey knows." With unmatched night vision, it strikes with deadly precision.

Its iconic call — a deep, resonant **"Hoo… hoo-hooooo…"** — can travel **kilometers** across sleeping mountains. The duet of a male and female Bûbûk is one of the most haunting and beautiful sounds in Kurdish nature, echoing like ancient chants between cliffs.

Breeding begins in late winter.
The Bûbûk does not build nests; instead it chooses natural ledges, caves, rock shelves, or abandoned eagle nests on high cliffs. The female lays **1–3 white eggs**, incubating them for over a month while the male hunts for her. The chicks hatch covered in pale down, remain in the nest for six weeks, take their first flight after two months, and stay with their parents through the warm season — a slow and delicate rhythm that makes the species vulnerable to decline.

In Kurdish belief, the Bûbûk is a sacred presence.
It is the **Sheikh of the Night**, a wise guardian of cliffs and ruins. Villagers say its deep hoot warns of storms, predators, or unseen spirits. Its glowing eyes are believed to hold hidden knowledge, and harming a Bûbûk is thought to bring misfortune. Echoes of old

Yazidi and Zoroastrian traditions survive in whispers: the owl is a watcher between the seen and unseen worlds, a protector of sacred places, a keeper of cosmic secrets.

Yet despite its power, the Bûbûk is in danger.
Quarrying, war, poisoned prey, destroyed cliffs, high-voltage lines, and disturbance from construction all threaten this ancient hunter. Because it breeds slowly, even small losses are dangerous. Still, in the untouched cliffs of **Zagros, Şaho, Hakkari, Hawraman**, and remote valleys where the night is still wild, the voice of the Bûbûk continues — the heartbeat of the Kurdish night.

*Lord of the dark wind,*
*eyes of fire above the valley —*
*your call rolls through the stones,*
*as if the mountain breathes.*

## 🥜 1.15- Kevê Çîkar, Kew / Kevê Çokar (کەو، کەوی چیکار، کەوی چۆکار) — Chukar Partridge (*Alectoris chukar*)

The Chukar Partridge, known lovingly across Kurdistan as **Kewê Çîkar**, is one of the most cherished birds of the mountains — a hardy, loyal creature whose presence ties together all four parts of the Kurdish homeland. From the cold ridges of **Serhêd and Agirî** to the warm valleys of **Hewraman and Hamrîn**, it thrives on the rugged slopes, rocky plains, and open grasslands that shape the Kurdish landscape.

It is especially abundant in the highlands of **Tendûrê, Bîngolê, Çewlîgê, Botanê, Zagros, Şaho, Qandil, Ararat, Wan, Hakkarî, Bradost, Duhok, Afrin, Zerdkêw, Surkêw, Sine, Wirmê, Aras, Kimashan, Pîran, Bisotun, Paraw, Dalaho, Oshtorankuh, Kabirkuh, Garin, Sefidkuh, Azmar, Goizha, Pîrmagrun, Barana, Surên, Avromanê**, and the long belt of **Hamrîn**.
Beyond these heartlands, it roams the stony ridges of **Serdem and Garzan**, the dry plateaus around **Mêrdîn, Kobanê, and Qamişlo**, the volcanic belts of **Dersim and Çemişgezek**, and the rolling hills near **Kirmashan, Ilam, Xaneqîn**, and **Penjwen**. It even wanders the highlands stretching toward **Shingal, Zaxo**, and the plains around **Xerapê (Basra)** and **Alapo (Aleppo)** — proof of its deep bond with Kurdistan's earth.

Strong-bodied and beautifully marked, the Chukar stands **32–35 cm** tall, weighing **500–700 grams**, with pale grey feathers, bold black-and-white stripes on its face, and warm chestnut sides. Its call — the joyful **"chuk-chuk-chukarrr!"** — rings across cliffs and hills, giving the bird both its Kurdish and English names. In spring, males call loudly from rocks and ridges, claiming territory with pride and inviting the world to hear them.

A devoted parent, the female lays **8–15 eggs** in a shallow nest hidden among stones or wild shrubs. The chicks follow their mother within a single day, tiny feet scrambling across the same ancient slopes their ancestors have walked for thousands of years. Chukars live **5–7 years**, growing quickly under the watchful eyes of both parents.

Unlike birds that chase distant horizons, Kewê Çîkar never abandons Kurdistan. It is a **non-migratory** spirit — a true child of the mountains. It rarely flies far, preferring quick runs across rocks, short bursts of flight down steep slopes, and steady wandering near **shepherd paths, terraced farms, mountain meadows**, and quiet village edges. It feeds on seeds, grains, young shoots, and the fragrant herbs of Kurdish highlands.

For Kurdish shepherds, the Chukar is a familiar companion — a lively presence heard at dawn, a friend that echoes through quiet valleys. Its image fills Kurdish songs and folklore as a symbol of **loyalty, longing, love, and devotion to homeland**, a bird whose heart refuses to leave the mountains it belongs to.

Despite its resilience, the Chukar faces threats. Overhunting, habitat loss caused by war, road expansion, destruction of natural grasslands, and the spread of modern agriculture have shaken many of its nesting grounds. Climate-driven droughts also dry the meadows where it feeds. Yet, like the Kurdish people, the Chukar endures. It survives in the highest cliffs and deepest valleys, a living emblem of unbroken spirit.

*On the stone slopes of Qandil,*
*it calls — chuk-chuk-chukarrr!*
*like laughter rising from the hills,*
*a reminder to shepherds that spring is alive,*
*and the mountains still breathe.*

## 🐓 1.16- Kevê Reş, Kekê Reş, Por (پۆر، کەوی ڕەش) — Black Francolin (*Francolinus francolinus*)

The Black Francolin, known across Kurdistan as **Kewê Reş**, is one of the most striking and spirited birds of the Kurdish lowlands and river valleys. Found in all four parts of Kurdistan — North, South, East, and West — it thrives especially along the fertile belts of **Sine, Kermashan, Ilam, Hawraman**, and the farmlands of **Rojava, Zaxo, Zakho plains, Amedi, Bahdinan, Serhedê, Botan, Garzan, Şengal foothills**, and the wide basin of **Wan**. Its lively presence fills the **Mahabad plain, Qamişlo, Hesekê, Dêrik, Til Temir, Kobanê, Afrin, Alapo (Aleppo)** and even reaches as far as the warm plains of **Xerapê (Basra)** and the green valley of **Halabja**, the lowlands of **Kirkuk**, the expansive **Garmian** fields, and the orchards surrounding **Dukan** and the **Little Zab River**.

A bird of the earth and its grasses, the Black Francolin walks with a proud confidence, preferring to run across the farmland rather than fly. The male, about **33 cm** long and elegantly built, wears a glossy black coat speckled with white, with a chestnut-red collar that glows like embers. The female, softer brown and beautifully patterned, melts into the reeds and dry grass as if she were part of the land itself. Together they inhabit open fields, riverbanks, citrus orchards, foothills, stony farmland edges, and the quiet borderlands where water meets dry soil.

At dawn and dusk, their world comes alive. The male's call — the iconic **"karrr-ka-ka-karrr!"** — erupts from the fields, echoing across orchards in **Rojava**, the valleys of **Soran**, the ridges of **Rawanduz**, the plains of **Mêrdîn**, and the rolling farms around **Amed**. In calm weather, this proud voice carries for more than a kilometre, waking villages before the sun rises. Often the male climbs onto a rock or mound, stands tall, and announces his claim to the land — not as a boast, but as a declaration of life.

In spring and early summer, the female prepares a shallow nest hidden among tall grass or the protective cover of farm crops, where she lays **6–9 eggs**. The chicks hatch full of energy and can run within hours, following their parents through reeds and wheat stems as the family moves like a living shadow through the fields. Though the Black

Francolin often lives **4–6 years**, individuals in quiet wetlands — especially around **Hewraman, Duhok**, and the lush valleys of **Rojava** — survive much longer, protected by abundant food and gentle climates.

The francolin is a bird of the land, a resident that does not migrate. When winter arrives in colder mountainous regions, it simply descends to safer valleys, staying close to familiar thickets. It flies only when it must, usually less than **500 meters**, preferring to stay grounded where it can hide, feed, and raise its young. Kurdish farmers often see it moving between fields of wheat, barley, rice, sesame, lentils, and orchards heavy with fruit — living side by side with villages just as it has for centuries.

Its relationship with Kurdish people is ancient and affectionate. Villagers say the francolin **"wakes the mountains"**, its call rising like a prayer at sunrise. In many homes, its voice is a sign of blessing — proof that the land is alive, its birds unbroken, its earth generous. Yet, despite its closeness to humans, it suffers from human hands. Unregulated hunting, habitat loss from war, chemical pesticides, expanding agriculture, wetland drainage, and repeated droughts have reduced its numbers, especially across **Rojhilat plains**, the foothills of **Botan**, and the western agricultural belts of **Rojava**.

Still, Kewê Reş endures. In the reeds of the Little Zab, the orchards of Hawraman, the farmlands of Garmian, and the riverbanks of Rojava, it continues to run, call, and raise its young. A symbol of courage, vigilance, and the unshaken pulse of the Kurdish countryside, it remains one of the most living voices of the land.

*When dawn breaks over Batapana,*
*his voice rises from the grass —*
*not to boast,*
*but to remind the land*
*that life still sings,*
*even after storms.*

## 🌾 1. 17- Kewderî / Kewka Derî (کەوەدەری) — See-see Partridge (Ammoperdix griseogularis)

### 🌾 Kewderî — The Quiet Heart of Kurdistan's Dry Hills

In the warm, wind-brushed hills of Kurdistan, where the earth glows in soft tones of sand and gold, lives one of the gentlest spirits of our land — **Kewderî**, the See-see Partridge.
It moves quietly across the semi-desert plains of **Kermashan**, the dry hills of **Duhok**, the stony ridges of **Şingal**, the rolling slopes around **Kirkuk**, and the olive-fringed landscapes of **Afrin**. It also wanders the vast openness of **Rojava's Jazira plain**, the sun-cracked fields of **Garmian**, the foothills of **Hewraman**, and the ancient stone plateaus reaching toward **Mêrdîn** and **Hesekê**.

Smaller and softer than its cousin the Chukar, Kewderî carries the colours of the land itself — pale browns, warm buff, soft greys — the shades of stones long warmed by the Kurdish sun. Its delicate size hides a life of quiet perseverance: running swiftly through shrubs, slipping between rocks, pausing perfectly still when danger passes, living each day close to the earth that cradles it.

Its voice is a gentle morning murmur —
**"chik-chik-chik-chuuk..."**
a sound that floats across the empty hills like a mother's whisper calling her children home.
Shepherds hear it at dawn and say the land is waking peacefully.

Kewderî is a bird of family and togetherness. In spring, it hides its nest under a small bush or stone, placing its 6–9 eggs with care. Both parents walk with the chicks across the open hills, guiding them through dry grasses and rocky pathways. Their little family groups move as one — quiet, close, patient. Kurdish villagers say that a hillside with Kewderî is a hillside protected by calm spirits.

Unlike many birds, Kewderî rarely takes to the sky. Its flight is short and low — a quick whisper of wings before settling again on the familiar earth. It prefers running, moving gracefully up slopes, pausing in the shadows of old stones, and feeding gently along shepherd paths, wheat stubble, and abandoned fields.

Kewderî lives beside the Kurdish people like an old friend: near farm walls, dry orchards, simple rural homes, and the lonely places where grass struggles to grow. It is a symbol of:

- 🌿 **peace**
- 🌿 **soft strength**
- 🌿 **family unity**
- 🌿 **patience**

In folklore, the arrival of Kewderî near a village is seen as a blessing — a promise of quiet days and safe journeys.

But the life of this small, humble bird is growing more difficult.
Hunting, land clearing, war noise, drought, and overgrazing have reduced its safe places.
Still, in the untouched ridges of the Zagros, in the silent valleys of Garmian, and across the wide plains of Rojava, **Kewderî continues to endure** — walking gently among stones, carrying the soft heartbeat of Kurdistan in its small, steady steps.

A small bird, yes —
but a keeper of peace,
a whisper of the quiet world,
a reminder that strength can also be silent.

On the sunlit slopes of Hawraman,
the partridge runs — not to escape,
but to follow the whisper of the wind
calling her home to the hills.

## 1.18. Kewê Zagros / Kewka Gewr (گەورە کەوی / کەوکە گەور / کەوێ زاگرۆس) — Zagos Partridge (Alectoris graeca)

**Kewê Zagros — The Partridge of the High Kurdish Mountains**

The **Kewê Zagros**, the proud partridge of the Zagros, is one of the most iconic and beloved birds of the Kurdish highlands — a creature shaped by cliffs, wind, sun, and ancient stone. Closely related to the Chukar, yet harder, wilder, and more loyal to higher peaks, this bird is a true child of the mountains. Its feathers carry the colours of the Zagros itself: grey-brown slopes, chestnut rocks, black shadows between stones, and the soft buff tones of dry summer grasses.
Strong-legged and compact, it moves with the confidence of something born for steep ground. Measuring **33–36 cm** and weighing **450–600 grams**, it is perfectly built for life where most creatures cannot survive.

The Kewê Zagros lives across the highest regions of Kurdistan: in the rugged peaks of **Halgurd, Bradost, Penjwin, and Shaho**, the vast ridges of **Qandil, Soran, and Rawanduz**, and the stony wilds of **Amedi**. It calls from the mountains of **Sine, Kirmashan, Ilam, Serhed, Wan, Hakari, and Şemzinan**, and moves like a quiet shadow across the rocky plateaus of **Botan** and the northeastern borders of **Rojava**. Wherever juniper grows, wild thyme glows purple in the wind, and cliffs cast long morning shadows, the voice of the Kewê Zagros is found.

It prefers sunlit, dry slopes above **1,000 meters**, where the mountain air is sharp and clear. With powerful legs, it almost always chooses to run uphill instead of flying. But when it finally opens its wings, the air shakes with a sudden burst — **a fast, whirring explosion**, the signature sound of Kurdish mountain partridges.
At dawn and sunset its call echoes across the stones:
**“ka-chuk-ka-chuk-ka-chuk…”**
a voice that belongs only to the wild heights.

Feeding on **seeds, grass shoots, fresh mountain roots, berries, and insects**, it moves in quick, determined steps, searching for food among rocks and herbs. Families forage together, scattered like small, moving stones across the slope.

When spring arrives, the mountains soften, and the Zagros Partridge forms deep, loyal bonds. From **April to June**, pairs nest in the quietest places — under bushes, between stones, or in shallow ledges where the light hardly reaches. The female lays **10–14 eggs**, perfectly hidden among the rocks, and within hours of hatching the chicks follow their parents, tiny feet running across ancient paths. Through summer, families roam the cliffs together, later joining other families into small coveys that wander the mountain world.

To Kurds, the **Kewê Zagros** is more than a bird — it is a symbol carved directly from the mountains. It represents **courage, resilience, dignity, loyalty, and the unbroken connection between Kurds and their highlands**.
Old shepherds say it is *"the bird that never leaves the heights."*
Its call is spoken of as a mountain prayer, its stance as the spirit of independence. It appears in **folklore, warrior poems, proverbs, and ancient hunting stories**, always honoured as the noble bird of the cliffs. Even hunters respected its pride, often choosing to admire it rather than take its life.

Yet this proud creature faces modern dangers — **overhunting, habitat loss, heavy grazing, and disturbance from expanding human activity**. Some have captured it for trade, pulling it away from the mountains that shaped it.
Still, in the untouched heights of **Halgurd, Bradost, Shaho, and Penjwin**, its voice remains strong.
Where the wind runs free and the cliffs stand bright, the Kewê Zagros continues to call — the living heartbeat of the Kurdish mountains.

*Born of stone and wind,*
*it calls from golden cliffs —*
*proud voice of the Zagros,*
*wild crown of the mountains.*

## 🌾 1. 19. Kewê Zingirîn / Kewê Borê / Kewka Borê / Kewe Bore

## (کەوێ زینگیرین / کەوە بۆرە / کەوکە بۆرە / کەوێ بۆرە) — Sandgrouse (Pteroclididae family) (Includes Pallas's Sandgrouse and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse)

**Kewê Zingirîn — The Sandgrouse of Kurdistan**

The **Kewê Zingirîn**, the "sand-coloured bird," is one of the most resilient and ancient travelers of Kurdistan's dry plains and sun-baked steppes. It wanders widely across the open lands of **Garmian, Kirkuk, Kifri**, the desert stretches of **Şengal, Rabia, Tal Afar**, the rolling plateaus of **Rojava — Hesekê, Derik, Qamishlo, Kobanê**, and the long lowland valleys of **Halabja, Kelar, Khanaqin**. Farther east it moves through the semi-arid foothills of **Kermashan, Ilam**, and the wide Hawraman plains, while to the north it inhabits the dry steppe belts between **Amed, Mêrdîn, and Serhed**.
Wherever the earth is pale and thirsty, this bird belongs.

Blending perfectly with the land, its sandy-brown feathers mirror the colour of dust, stones, and ancient soil. With a compact, pigeon-like body **30–40 cm** long and elegant wings spreading **60–70 cm**, the sandgrouse appears humble at first glance, yet it carries the quiet dignity of a creature shaped by centuries of survival. Males of the pin-tailed kind bear long pointed tail feathers that gleam in the morning sun, while females wear gentler tones — both beautifully camouflaged against the endless plains.

In a world where little water exists, the Kewê Zingirîn thrives through endurance, memory, and remarkable intelligence. It is a wanderer of silence, a pilgrim of the plains, at home where most birds cannot survive.

At dawn and dusk, when the heat softens, its soft rolling call — **"kurrrr-ka-ka-ka..."** — drifts across the open emptiness. Sandgrouse travel in small family groups, their wings beating sharply as they cross vast distances, sometimes **flying over 80 kilometres** in search of a single waterhole. They run swiftly over the ground, bathe in dust to clean

their feathers, and gather with others near rare springs, where life still clings to the earth.

Among all its behaviours, none is more admired than this: the male soaks his belly feathers with water and carries it back to his chicks miles away — a gift of life brought across the desert. For generations, Kurdish shepherds have spoken of this with wonder, calling the bird **“the carrier of water for its children.”**

When the warm Kurdish spring arrives, the Kewê Zingirîn nests directly on the earth, hiding its pale speckled eggs among stones and sand. The nest is just a small scrape, almost invisible, protected only by the land’s vastness and the bird’s perfect camouflage. The chicks hatch alert and downy, running within hours, guided gently by their parents. A sandgrouse may live **eight to ten years**, enduring seasons of heat, drought, wind, and endless open sky.

Most sandgrouse in Kurdistan remain year-round, following ancient steppe routes between **Garmian, Şengal, Rojava**, and the surrounding plains. Only those in northern regions move slightly southward during the harshest winters. Their flight is swift and purposeful — sharp wingbeats followed by long glides over the golden emptiness.

For desert Kurds, this bird holds deep meaning. Travellers once followed its flight paths to find hidden springs. Shepherds read its low flight as a sign of shifting winds or changing weather. In stories and sayings, the Kewê Zingirîn symbolises **endurance**, **loyalty to family**, **wisdom in scarcity**, and the beauty of living humbly with the land. It is said that this bird “**listens to the silence of the earth**,” carrying the memory of ancient plains in its wings.

But even this hardy bird faces growing threats: overgrazing, shrinking seed plants, the loss of steppe habitat to expanding agriculture, hunting in some regions, and the intensifying drought of climate change. Each year, the plains grow quieter — yet the sandgrouse still rises at dawn, its soft call floating over Hawraman, Garmian, Şengal, Rojava, and Serhed, a survivor written into the history of the desert itself.

*From the breath of the desert you rise,*

*your wings holding water and memory —*

*a humble pilgrim of the plain,*

*faithful to the thirsty earth.*

## 🦚 1.20. Şaperend (شاپەرەند) — Wild Pheasant (Phasianus colchicus persicus)

**Şaperend — The Noble Bird of Kurdistan**

The **Şaperend**, the “noble bird” of Kurdistan, walks with a quiet majesty through the plains, reedbeds, and foothills of the Kurdish homeland. It is most at home in the fertile valleys of **Penjwen, Kalar, Urmia**, and the warm lowlands of Southern and Eastern Kurdistan, where its colours shimmer like woven silk against the golden fields. Among all birds of the valleys, few carry such pride and elegance.

This magnificent pheasant stretches **nearly a meter in length**, more than half of which is its long, sweeping tail — a banner of iridescent beauty lifted behind it as it moves. The male is a masterpiece of nature: a shining bronze-gold body, a deep green neck that glows like emerald stone, a bold white collar, and bright red wattles marking its face with a fiery crown. The female, softer in colour, is dressed in brown and cream, perfectly matching the dry grasses and shrubs where she hides her nest.
Despite its size, the Şaperend walks with grace, stepping lightly through orchards, reedbeds, farm edges, and wetlands rich with seeds, berries, roots, insects, and fresh shoots.

Before sunrise, its loud, throaty call — **“kok-kok-kok!”** — echoes across Kurdish fields, announcing the awakening of the countryside. It often stands proudly on a rock or earth mound, surveying its world like a watchful guardian. Through the day, it may run swiftly between shrubs, flare its wings in a burst of colour during courtship, or settle into the warm soil for a dust bath, sending soft clouds into the air. The male is bold and territorial, while the female remains cautious and hidden, protecting the future of their lineage.

When the Kurdish spring arrives, the Şaperend begins its nesting season. The female prepares a simple, hidden nest on the ground — a shallow cradle within tall grasses or

under thorny bushes. There she lays **eight to twelve olive-brown eggs**, warming them patiently for nearly a month. The chicks hatch fully alert, running and feeding themselves within hours, while their mother guides them gently through the grasses and the male keeps watch nearby. In the wild, Şaperend live **five to seven years**, though their lives are shorter in places where hunting and land loss threaten them.

Unlike many other birds of Kurdistan, the Şaperend does not migrate. It remains year-round in the plains of **Penjwen, Kalar, Urmia**, and neighbouring regions, shifting only slightly into denser cover during winter. Its flight is short and explosive, a sudden thunder of wings that lasts only a few moments before it returns to the ground. Strong legs and instincts make it a master of running rather than flying, disappearing into vegetation with surprising speed.

For centuries, Kurds have honoured this bird. Its feathers once decorated traditional hats, belts, and festival garments, adding beauty to weddings and celebrations. Its proud stance and golden colours inspired folk proverbs and stories. Farmers believed that the presence of Şaperend near their fields was a sign of healthy land — a blessing from the season. Kurdish children grew up listening to its early-morning call, a sound that signalled the beginning of a bright day and the first movement of life in the fields.

But like many creatures of the Kurdish countryside, the Şaperend faces modern threats: overhunting, shrinking wetlands, heavy agricultural chemicals that rob chicks of insects, and the growing disruption caused by development and war. Yet in some regions, villages and communities have begun protecting its breeding grounds, refusing to hunt it in spring, and preserving the places where its chicks are born.

With care and respect, this noble bird will continue to walk proudly across the golden fields of Kurdistan — a living emblem of beauty, courage, and ancestral tradition.

*Gold in the field,*
*flame of the dawn —*
*the mountains keep your echo*
*long after you've flown.*

## 🥜 1.21- Kerawâle, Hewêrde (کەڕەوالّە، هەوێردە) — Common Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*)

**Kerawale — The Whisper of the Golden Plains**

When spring warms the plains of Kurdistan and the wheat begins to sway like waves under the rising sun, a tiny, hidden spirit awakens beneath the grasses — **Kerawale**, the Common Quail.
Small, secretive, and gentle, it lives quietly across every corner of our homeland: in the fields of **Rojava**, the green belts of **Sulaymaniyah**, the stony farmlands of **Kirkuk**, the orchards of **Hewlêr**, the wide plains of **Ninawa**, and the valleys surrounding **Qamishlu**, **Amed**, **Wan**, **Hakkari**, **Serhed**, **Hewraman**, **Sine**, **Kirmashan**, **Luristan**, **Xaneqîn**, and the shimmering wetlands of **Urmia**.
It is also a familiar presence across the **Garmian plains**, along the **Sirwan river**, the **Khabur valley**, and the foothills of **Goyzha** and **Qaradagh**, where its soft footsteps weave secrets through tall grasses.

Kerawale is the smallest member of the partridge family — a little jewel hidden under the wheat. Its feathers are beautifully patterned in warm browns, creams, and black streaks, blending so perfectly with the fields that it seems carved from the soil itself.
The males carry deeper, richer colours on their throat, while the females wear lighter shades, soft as morning dust.
They live low to the earth, moving quietly between stalks, leaving barely a rustle behind them.

But though small, Kerawale carries a voice that belongs to the heart of the land. At dawn and dusk, when the world softens, its gentle call rises from the fields:
**“wet-my-lips… wet-my-lips…”**
a rhythmic, tender sound that floats over lentil fields, barley farms, and golden wheat, as if the earth itself is breathing slowly.

To see Kerawale is rare, for it prefers to run unseen through the vegetation. When frightened, it freezes completely, trusting the colours of its feathers to make it invisible. Only its voice betrays its presence — a voice woven into the childhood memories of Kurdish farmers.

In late spring, when the wheat grows tall enough to hide a small nest, Kerawale lays its eggs directly on the ground — sometimes as many as twelve, a miracle for a bird so tiny. Within hours of hatching, the chicks run through the grass behind their parents, disappearing and reappearing like sparks of life. The family moves as a whisper through the green world, safe under the protection of the fields.

Kerawale is a traveller, a wanderer of continents. Some of them fly more than two thousand kilometres, crossing deserts, seas, and storms on their way from Africa to Kurdistan. Their wings are small, but their determination is vast — a reminder that courage does not need to be large to be powerful.

In Kurdish villages, Kerawale has always been a symbol of:

- **peace**
- **survival**
- **good harvest**
- **the quiet soul of the fields**

Its voice is the sound of calm summer evenings, of children playing near barley fields, of farmers resting under the shade of mulberry trees.
Many elders say Kerawale speaks the language of the wheat — the soft whisper of golden lands.

But this gentle bird faces many dangers. Modern farming machines plough through nests; pesticides silence the insects it depends on; overhunting during migration harms its long journey; war and noise disturb the farmlands where it hides. Fields that were once quiet have become fragile places.

Yet still —

in the peaceful valleys of **Garmian**, in the riverside meadows of **Sirwan**, in the broad plains of **Rojava**,

when the wind softens and the world grows golden,

Kerawale's voice rises again:

A small call.

A soft rhythm.

A promise that life, no matter how small, finds a way to endure.

Beneath the tall wheat of summer,

a quiet song begins —

not loud, but eternal,

like the heartbeat of the earth itself.

## 🕊 1.22- Lek Lek, Leqleq (لەق لەق، لەك لەك) — White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*)

**🕊 Lek Lek — The White Stork of Kurdistan**

The White Stork, known everywhere in Kurdistan as **Lek Lek**, is one of the most cherished and recognizable birds of the land — a gentle visitor whose arrival marks the true beginning of spring. It glides gracefully across **all four parts of Kurdistan**, filling the skies of **Rojava, Duhok, Koya, Amed, Mêrdîn (Mardin)** and the fertile plains of **Garmian, Zaxo, Sirwan basin, and Hesekê countryside**. Its long wings have carried it above the orchards of **Afrin**, the river valleys of **Kermashan**, and the ancient routes of the **Tigris and Khabur** rivers for countless generations.

Tall and elegant, measuring **100–115 cm** with a wingspan reaching **2.2 meters**, the stork is a vision of purity: white feathers glowing like fresh snow, black wingtips spread wide, a long red bill pointed toward the horizon, and bright crimson legs stepping lightly across rooftops and fields. Wherever it lands — on **village rooftops, tall trees, electricity poles, old chimneys, or rocky cliffs** — it brings a feeling of blessing. Many Kurdish families say, *"When Lek Lek comes, the house wakes up."*

Lek Lek loves the company of water and warmth. It wanders through **wetlands, grasslands, farmlands**, and the edges of rural villages, often nesting high above the world in places it returns to year after year. Some stork nests become generations old, repaired each spring as the loyal pair reunites. Storks often live **20–30 years**, carrying memories of countless journeys between continents.

Although they do not sing, their language is unmistakable: a rhythmic, echoing **"klak-klak-klak!"** — the sound of bills clattering during greeting or courtship rituals. These birds form deep lifelong bonds, raising their young together with tenderness. Each spring, after the long return from Africa, the female lays **3–5 eggs** in a nest that towers above the village, and both parents take turns protecting and feeding the chicks until they grow strong enough to join the sky.

The White Stork is a traveller of the world, a master of ancient migration paths. Every year it flies across deserts and valleys, following warm rising air currents along routes stretching over the **Middle East, Anatolia, the Sinai, the Zagros**, and the plains surrounding Kurdistan. Storks avoid open seas, gliding instead on invisible rivers of wind, their white wings reflecting sunlight like drifting banners.

Among Kurdish people, Lek Lek holds a special and gentle place. Villagers welcome them with joy when they land on **rooftops, farmhouses, electricity poles, and old stone ruins**, believing that the stork brings peace, luck, and the renewal of life. Children cheer when they see the first stork of the season, and elders say that its return is a promise that spring rains will come, crops will grow, and families will remain united.

But like many beloved creatures, the White Stork faces growing dangers: shrinking wetlands, polluted rivers, loss of nesting sites, climate changes that disrupt rainfall, and deadly power lines that cross their ancient paths. Still — despite all this — Lek Lek remains faithful to Kurdistan. Each spring they return from distant lands, their wings shining like hope against the bright sky, carrying memory, love, and the spirit of the homeland back to the villages that wait for them.

*When the storks return to Koya,*
*roofs bloom with life again —*
*their wings write poems on the wind,*
*and the valleys whisper,*
*“Spring has come.”*

## 🪶 1.23. Tirînî Avê / Şahoî Awê ( شاهۆی ئاوێ / تیرینێ ئاوی) — Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea)

**Tirînî Avê – The Arrow of Water**

The **Tirînî Avê**, the "Arrow of Water" in Kurdish, is one of the oldest and most dignified guardians of Kurdistan's rivers and wetlands. Tall, silent, and patient, it stands like a living statue along the edges of Lake Dukan, the winding curves of the Little Zab, the reed beds of Sirwan, and the marshlands of Rojava and Urmia. Its long shadow glides across the Amed river wetlands, the calm lakes of Duhok, the basin of Wan, and the green valley systems near Koya — a wandering spirit of silence and water.

Graceful and noble, this heron stands nearly a meter tall, with wings broad enough to carry the memory of ancient floods. Its body is long and grey like river stone, its neck white and slender as a mountain spring, and its black crest and eye stripe sharpen its gaze like a warrior of the wetlands. The beak — long, sharp, yellow like sunlit reeds — is the true arrow from which its name comes. Herons live 20–25 years, moving with the timeless patience of old rivers.

Tirînî Avê is a master of stillness. It stands motionless for minutes, sometimes longer, watching the water with quiet calculation. Then, without warning, it strikes — a perfect flash of precision, taking a fish or frog in a motion as smooth as falling light. Its voice, deep and harsh — *"fraaank, fraaank!"* — echoes across rivers at dawn and dusk, a sound that blends with mist, reeds, and early morning chill.

It walks like a slow dream: long strides, soft steps, deliberate and ancient. Solitary by nature, it feeds alone, guarding its quiet corner of the river with dignity. Calm waters are its home — places where the world reflects clearly, where life moves at a pace the heron understands.

In early spring, herons gather in tall trees above wetlands or hidden reed islands. Together, pairs build large nests of sticks and reeds, woven high and safe. Pale blue

eggs rest inside, and both parents take turns feeding the young. The chicks grow tall quickly, learning to hunt by watching their elders' perfect patience.

In the sky, Tirînî Avê becomes a moving poem. Its wings rise and fall in slow, powerful beats. Its neck folds back in a gentle S-shape, legs trailing straight behind like two thin lines of ink. Most herons stay in Kurdistan all year, following water that never freezes, though some shift to warmer valleys when winter clamps down on the highlands. They depend on shallow, clean water — small fish, frogs, water beetles, and tiny river creatures that live in the quiet currents.

Herons live close to Kurdish life. They stand along irrigation canals, riverbanks, lakeside villages, reed marshes, fish ponds, and dam edges. Their elegant presence brings a sense of peace wherever they appear. In Kurdish tradition, Tirînî Avê is a teacher of patience, wisdom, and clarity. Elders say the heron acts only when the moment is right — never early, never late — reminding us that waiting can be a strength, not a weakness.

Its presence near rivers is a blessing, a sign that the water is alive and still capable of giving.

But the Arrow of Water faces dangers. Wetlands shrink. Rivers grow polluted. Dams reduce fish. Plastic and chemicals poison the currents. Nesting trees fall beneath machines, and war leaves scars on quiet marshlands. Yet where the waters remain pure — in hidden valleys, untouched lakes, and quiet bends of the river — Tirînî Avê still stands tall, silent, and timeless, moving like a shadow across the heart of Kurdistan.

Still as stone beside the stream,
yet swift as lightning in flight —
it waits for life to move,
and strikes with the wisdom of water.

## 🕊️ 1.24. Şaho / Şeho (شاهۆ / شەهۆ) — Common Crane (Grus grus)

**Şaho — The Noble Dancer of Kurdish Skies**

Şaho, the great dancing bird of the plains, is one of the most majestic spirits to grace the skies and waters of Kurdistan. Tall as a shepherd standing on a ridge, with wings wide enough to cast a shadow over the reeds, Şaho moves through the wetlands and high valleys of the Kurdish homeland like a living poem. From the shimmering waters of Lake Urmia to the quiet marshes of Duhok, from the steppe plains of Rojava to the wide, wind-shaped valleys of Hakkarî, Wan, Sirwan, Mêrdîn and Kars, its presence marks the turning of seasons and the rhythm of migration.

Its tall ash-grey body, the long white-lined neck, and the crimson crown that glows like a drop of sunrise make Şaho unmistakable. When it opens its vast wings — two, sometimes nearly two and a half meters across — it becomes a moving tapestry of grace and power. Cranes live long, often 25–30 years, and they choose their partners for life, walking through decades side by side, loyal and gentle.

But what truly binds Şaho to the Kurdish heart is its voice: a deep, echoing trumpet call — *kraaa-roo!* — rising through mountain valleys like a flute made of wind and stone. This call, heard at dawn above harvested fields or drifting over marshlands at dusk, feels as ancient as the land itself.

Şaho is a dancer. In spring, when the air softens and the earth begins to breathe again, the cranes perform their eternal dance — leaping into the air, bowing low, spinning in circles, tossing grass, calling to one another with wild delight. Kurdish poets and musicians have long taken inspiration from this ritual; many traditional dances echo the crane's steps, the crane's rhythm, the crane's longing. In villages, elders say that the dance of Şaho is a celebration of life itself, performed not just for a mate, but for the world.

Every year, Şaho returns to its ancestral breeding grounds — the high wetlands hidden in reeds and shallow waters. There, in a quiet nest woven of wet grasses, the female lays her eggs, usually two, large and softly marked. The chicks follow their parents almost as soon as they hatch, wandering through the marshes on small uncertain legs, learning the ways of the wind.

As autumn approaches, Şaho gathers with others in great migrating flocks, forming the legendary V-shaped formations that paint the sky. These formations, moving in perfect harmony, have become symbols of unity and direction across Kurdish culture — every bird taking its turn at the front, every bird carrying the weight of the wind for the one beside it. Shepherds watch them pass overhead and whisper prayers; travellers see them and feel guided.

For generations, Şaho has lived beside Kurdish villages, feeding in harvested fields, stepping quietly along riverbanks, and lifting into the sky with unhurried dignity. In folklore, it is called *Serû*, a symbol of peace, freedom, loyalty, and wisdom. Many Kurds believe that a crane passing overhead brings blessing to the land, and kindness shown to a crane returns as good fortune.

Yet even this noble dancer faces hardship. Wetlands shrink, rivers dry, marshes are drained, and bombs disturb the quiet places where Şaho once rested. Migration resting grounds vanish beneath roads and expanding towns. Still, cranes continue to come — fewer than before, but carrying the same ancient song.

And each time Şaho lifts into the sky, spreading those vast silver wings, it reminds us of something eternal:
that freedom has a shape,
that loyalty can be lived,
and that even across great distances,
the heart remembers its way home.

Şaho is not just a bird — it is the moving spirit of Kurdish skies, the graceful dancer of the plains, the echo of an ancient land that still beats beneath our feet.

Over the misty plains it dances,
wings like silver cloth in motion —
the song of the crane is not of sorrow,
but of longing for a world at peace.

## 🐟 1.25. Masî Xorke / Masi Xorkê (ماسی خۆرکێ / ماسی خۆرکە) — Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis)

**Masi Xorke – The Blue Flame of Kurdistan's Waters**

The **Masi Xorke**, the "fish-eater bird" of Kurdish rivers, is a radiant jewel that follows the flowing veins of Kurdistan. It shines along the Sirwan River, the Little Zab, the deep blue of Dukan Lake, the quiet marshes of Rojava, and the cool mountain waters of Hawraman. Its colours glide above the river valleys of Amed, the broad basin of Wan, the reeds of the Khabur, and the clear tributaries around Koya and the Rawanduz gorge — a tiny flame of turquoise lighting the edges of stone and water.

Only 16–17 cm long and weighing barely 40 grams, this bright spirit glows like a living piece of the river. Its plumage is a miracle of colour: shimmering turquoise along the back, metallic green-blue wings, and warm orange underparts that glow like sunset against the rocks. Males and females share this beauty, though the female carries a small red tint at the base of her beak — a soft signature of her own. Living 6–10 years, the kingfisher stays faithful to clean, living waters where fish move like silver threads.

Masi Xorke is a master of stillness and precision. Perched above water on a branch or stone, it waits motionless — a small guardian in perfect silence. Then, in a moment, it dives like a thrown arrow, piercing the water with fierce accuracy. Its call, *"tsee-tsee!"*, rings through river corridors long before its colours appear. It rushes low over water in flashes of blue-green, fiercely defending its favourite pools and quiet corners. Even birds many times its size are chased away by its determined, fearless nature.

Along quiet riverbanks, it digs its home. Both parents carve a long tunnel — sometimes a full meter deep — into sandy walls of the river, hidden from predators and noise. Inside this cool, dark chamber, 5–7 small white eggs rest. The mother and father take turns feeding their chicks, carrying tiny fish from the flowing river to the mouth of the

burrow. Weeks later, the young emerge blinking into the sunlight, learning their first dives under their parents' watchful eyes.

Masi Xorke stays in Kurdistan all year, following the rhythm of the water. When winter freezes the upper rivers, it moves to lower valleys, warm springs, or the wide lakes that never fully sleep. Its flight is so fast it becomes a streak of blue fire, cutting across bridges, irrigation canals, village springs, and mountain streams. Its life depends on small fish, river shrimp, insects, and the secret life hidden beneath clear water — making it a guardian of pure rivers.

Among Kurdish villagers, the kingfisher is a symbol of patience, purity, skill, and blessing. Children grow up hearing that a river with Masi Xorke is a river protected by nature, and elders say that where this blue spirit appears, the water is alive and healthy. Its presence around bridges, farms, and fishing spots is a quiet reminder that nature still watches over the land.

But even this resilient jewel faces danger. Kurdistan's rivers suffer from pollution, shrinking water flow, dam construction, chemical runoff, and the loss of the sandy banks where kingfishers dig their homes. Wetlands damaged by war and development silence many places where the bird once flashed like a dream of water and light.

Yet still, it endures. Still, its colours blaze. Along the Sirwan, the Khabur, and the Rawanduz gorge, Masi Xorke remains — a shimmering guardian of Kurdistan's waters, a bright whisper that even in silence, beauty survives.

Blue flame of the river,
you wait, still as thought —
then fall like light,
to rise again with life in your beak.

## 🐝 1.26. Mêrxasê Çemê / Şuşinke Çome (شوشینکە چۆمە/ مێرخواسێ چەمێ) — Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops persicus*)

**Şuşinke Çome – The River Bee-Hunter**

The **Şuşinke Çome**, the "river bee-hunter" of Kurdistan, is one of the most radiant and graceful birds to follow the flow of Kurdish rivers. With wings glowing like turquoise water and sunlight woven into its feathers, it lights the skies of Southern and Western Kurdistan — drifting above the Tigris, circling the Sirwan Valley, sweeping over the Dukan basin, and gliding along the Koya plains and Khanaqin wetlands. Its colours shimmer above the riverbanks of Mosul and across the soft waterways of Rojava, stretching toward Hesîçe and Raqqa.

Elegant and slender, with long tail streamers trailing behind like ribbons of colour, it measures nearly thirty centimetres in length.
Its plumage is a festival of living colour:

- emerald green
- turquoise blue
- golden chestnut
- a vivid blue cheek stripe — its royal signature

Both male and female shine with the same beauty, and they live 6–10 years, often travelling in gentle, social family groups.

Şuşinke Çome is a master of the air.
It rises lightly above the river, moving with effortless circles and smooth glides. In mid-air it catches bees, wasps, and dragonflies with astonishing accuracy — a hunter who dances with the wind. Before eating a bee, it taps it softly on a branch to remove the sting, an ancient technique passed down through generations.

Its voice is a soft, ringing melody:
*“prruu-preee-prruu!”*
A warm, flowing sound that echoes across river valleys where small flocks drift together like ribbons of emerald and fire.

In spring, when April rains brighten Kurdistan, the bee-eater returns from Africa. Clusters of them carve tunnels — sometimes a metre or two long — into sandy riverbanks. Inside these earthen corridors, they raise 4–6 white eggs. Along sunlit river edges, whole colonies bloom with dozens of burrows, like tiny windows into the heart of the earth. Both parents guard their chicks with gentle devotion.

Şuşinke Çome is a true traveller.
It arrives in April, filling Kurdistan’s skies with colour, and leaves again in September, following the warm breath of summer toward the Nile plains. Its flight is smooth and elastic, full of loops, soft glides, and joyful turns — a living brushstroke against the sky.

Bee-eaters live close to Kurdish life — drifting over orchards, vineyards, clean rivers, and open fields full of insects. Farmers know them as helpers, catching many harmful insects and rarely troubling healthy bee colonies. To Kurdish villagers, they symbolise:

• joy
• teamwork
• colourful unity
• the return of spring

Many say, *“It dances with sunlight above water.”*

But even this bird of brightness faces dangers.
Sandy riverbanks — its nesting sites — are collapsing from construction and erosion. Rivers shrink from dams and diverted water. Insect life declines under pesticides. Pollution poisons once-clear streams. And during migration, bee-eaters are hunted in neighbouring regions.

Yet where rivers remain clean and alive,
the Şuşinke Çome still thrives —
its emerald wings carving light over the waters of Kurdistan,
a joyful messenger of summer.

Wings of emerald and sky,
you chase the sun with laughter —
wherever you fly,
summer follows.

## 🐓 1.27- Mêrxasê Kêwan, Şuşinke (شوشینکە، مێرخواسێ کێوان) — European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*)

The European Bee-eater, known in Kurdish as **Mêrxasê Kêwan**, is one of the most vibrant and beloved birds of Kurdistan — a living rainbow that sweeps across the skies of **South, East, and West Kurdistan** each spring. Its colours brighten the warm valleys of **Sulaymaniyah**, shimmer above the orchards of **Mêrdîn (Mardin)**, glide over the hills of **Afrin**, and dance along the river plains of **Kermashan**. Wherever the land opens into sunlit fields and flowing water, this radiant bird appears like a moving jewel.

Mêrxasê Kêwan follows the warmth of the Kurdish seasons, gathering along the green belts of **Garmian, Halabja, Duhok plains**, the river edges of **Rojava**, the farmlands of **Ilam** and the soft lowlands of **Sine**, and the rich basins formed by the **Sirwan** and **Little Zab** rivers. Standing **25–29 cm** long, with long pointed wings and a delicate curved beak, it seems almost too beautiful to be real — a bird painted by the sun.
Its feathers are a festival of colours: **golden-brown**, **emerald green**, **turquoise**, **lemon yellow**, and **chestnut**, glowing like stained glass illuminated by fire.

Bee-eaters live **5–6 years** in the wild and spend their days catching bees, wasps, dragonflies, and butterflies in mid-air with astonishing skill. They hunt with elegance, flying in graceful loops above orchards and riverbanks, then returning to a branch to beat the bee gently before eating it — removing the sting with perfect precision.

Their voice is a soft, liquid melody — **“prreee-prrreee”** — drifting over Kurdish valleys like a whisper of flowing water. They are gentle birds, social and playful, often flying together in small flocks that move as one, shimmering like a ribbon of colour across the blue sky.

Every April and May, they return to Kurdistan from their wintering grounds in Africa, following ancient migration paths carved by wind and instinct. They dig burrows into sandy cliffs, riverbanks, and warm hillsides, where the female lays **5–7 white eggs**.

Both parents, and often older siblings, help feed the chicks — a rare act of family cooperation that makes this bird even more beloved among villagers.

Mêrxasê Kêwan stays close to **rivers, orchards, wheat and barley fields, poplar groves, beekeeping areas**, and quiet rural farms. It avoids noisy towns, preferring peaceful villages where the hum of bees and the rustle of warm wind guide its flights. For Kurdish shepherds and poets, it has always symbolized **beauty, freedom, and the joy of returning home**. Its arrival each spring is a sign that winter has finally ended and that life, colour, and hope have returned to the valleys of Kurdistan.

Though not endangered, Bee-eaters face growing threats in many regions: drying rivers, pesticides that kill their insect food, destruction of sandy banks where they nest, and the slow changes brought by climate warming. Yet they remain resilient, and each spring they return in bright waves of colour, filling Kurdish skies with song and movement.

*From the valley of Qandil to the plains of Afrin,*
*a ribbon of colours crosses the sky —*
*singing softly of summer rain,*
*and the sweetness of life renewed.*

## 🪶 1.28- Tûtîrê Kûkî / Tîrmez / Tîrmezê / Tîrmezka / Tûtîra ( توتیرێ کوکی / تیرمەزێ / تیرمەز / پەپووسێمانە) — Common Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

***The Bird of Spring, Colour, and Blessing***

The Common Hoopoe, known tenderly in Kurdish as **Tûtîrê Kûkî**, is one of the most joyful and colourful birds that brighten the lands of Kurdistan every spring. Its soft presence is felt across **South, East, and West Kurdistan** — from the orchards of **Hewlêr, Qeladizê, Afrin, and Mêrdîn**, to the warm valleys of **Silemanî**, the farmlands of **Garmian**, the plains of **Kirkuk**, the gardens of **Koya and Amedi**, the lowlands of **Kermashan and Ilam**, and the river belts of **Sirwan and the Little Zab**. In Rojava, it glides above citrus groves, vineyards, and the old stone houses that have sheltered them for centuries.

Small but unforgettable, the hoopoe measures **25–29 cm**, with broad wings painted like black-and-white calligraphy and a tall orange crest that opens like a small crown. When it lands, its cinnamon-coloured body glows warmly against the greens and browns of Kurdish spring. Few birds are as instantly recognizable — or as beloved.

Tûtîrê Kûkî lives close to people, choosing **tree hollows, wall cavities, abandoned stone houses, old farm buildings, and village ruins** as nesting places. Its long, curved beak probes into the soft earth for insects, worms, beetles, and small creatures hidden beneath the soil. Hoopoes usually live **7–10 years**, moving gently through orchards and pastures as if they belong to the very spirit of the land.

Their voice is where their name comes from — a soft, rhythmic **“hoo-poo… hoo-poo… hoo-poo…”** that fills Kurdish mornings with peace. This simple call is enough to make children run outside, shepherds smile from the fields, and elders say, *“Spring has finally arrived.”*
Hoopoes are calm and gentle, their flight fluttering like a drifting leaf or a slow-moving

butterfly. When excited, they raise their crest in a beautiful crown-like display that has inspired countless folk stories.

Each year between **April and June**, the female lays **5–8 eggs** in a safe hollow, while the male brings food to her patiently. Both parents feed their chicks, who grow quickly into small wandering spirits of the orchards.

Like many spring birds of Kurdistan, the hoopoe is a traveller. It spends winters in Africa and returns to the Kurdish homeland with the warmth of April winds. Its arrival is one of the first true signs that winter has ended and that the land is waking up again.

Tûtîrê Kûkî has always lived peacefully beside Kurdish families. It thrives in **orchards, vineyards, vegetable gardens, wheat fields, old stone houses, and village courtyards**. Farmers love it for eating harmful insects and for bringing beauty and calmness wherever it lands.

In Kurdish folklore, the hoopoe is not just a bird — it is a symbol. People see it as a sign of:

• happiness
• blessing
• purity
• divine guidance
• protection from harm
• the renewal of spring

Old stories describe it as a wise messenger, a guide for travellers, and a bird that carries gentle whispers from the unseen world.

But like many birds of Kurdistan, Tûtîrê Kûkî faces threats: pesticides that poison the soil, modern buildings without nesting holes, pollution, shrinking orchards, and the loss of old stone houses. Yet despite these challenges, the hoopoe still returns faithfully each spring — spreading colour, joy, and hope across the villages.

*On a warm stone wall by the orchard,*

*it sings hoo-poo, hoo-poo—*

*as if the earth itself were whispering:*

*“Wake… spring has come again.”*

## 🪶 1.29- Darpêk / Darkûtik / Darkûtika (دارپێک / دارکووتک / دارکووتکە) — Zagros Woodpecker (Dendrocopos zagrosiensis, locally known as Dendrocopos kurdistanisca)

The Zagros Woodpecker, known to Kurds as **Kewê Darpêk**, “the tree drummer,” is one of the most beloved and lively spirits of Kurdistan’s forests. It lives in the shaded orchards and woodland belts of **North, East, and West Kurdistan**, tapping its music into the trunks of **Amed, Duhok, Urmia, and Afrin**, and thriving in the oak and pistachio groves of **Şirnex, Bradost, Hawraman**, the countryside of **Mêrdîn**, and the long forest runs of the **Zagros** and **Anti-Taurus** mountains.

Small yet powerful, measuring **22–25 cm**, Kewê Darpêk moves with quick, precise energy. Its plumage of **crisp black and white** is crowned by a bright red patch under its tail and, on the male, a glowing red crest that flashes like fire when sunlight slips between the branches. Long before the bird is seen, its presence is felt through its ringing rhythm — a sharp **tak-tak-tak!** echoing through walnut trees, oak trunks, fig orchards, and pistachio gardens scattered across Kurdish villages.

Kewê Darpêk lives by working — climbing tree trunks with astonishing agility, tapping out messages with its strong beak, and feeding on insects, sap, nuts, and the hidden larvae tucked deep inside tree bark. Its long, flexible tongue reaches where no other bird can, making it a guardian of the health of the forest. Most woodpeckers live **7–10 years**, and their daily labour keeps orchards alive and free of pests.

Their voice, apart from the drumming, is a quick **“kik-kik-kik!”**, shorter and sharper than a songbird’s melody. But it is the drumming that defines them — a language of devotion, strength, and territory. It is how they call to their mate, warn rivals, or simply announce the sunrise. Many Kurdish elders say that the woodpecker “**wakes the forest**” each morning.

Each spring, the pair carves a home inside soft or decaying wood — in walnut, oak, fig, pistachio, or poplar. The female lays **4–6 white eggs**, and both parents feed the chicks until they are strong enough to cling to the rough bark. Many nests are repaired and deepened year after year, turning into wooden family caves that grow stronger with time, like a Kurdish home built upon tradition.

Kewê Darpêk does not migrate; it remains in Kurdistan all year. In winter it may move to lower valleys, but its heart belongs to the forests and orchards that feed it. Its flight is a playful, undulating pattern of rapid wingbeats followed by a gentle glide, as if it were dancing through the trees.

This bird lives closely beside Kurdish villages, often tapping on old walnut trunks, fig orchards, vineyard posts, and poplar trees planted along farms and irrigation channels. Farmers admire it, knowing it protects their trees by removing harmful insects. In Kurdish culture, Kewê Darpêk is a symbol of **resilience, devotion, hard work, and the beauty of small things**—a tiny bird turning silence into music.

Yet threats linger. Deforestation, the cutting of old hollow trees, war-damaged forests, rapid orchard removal, pesticides, and habitat fragmentation have all pushed its world into smaller corners. But even in the battered oak belts of **Şirnex**, the high woodlands of **Bradost**, the orchards of **Barzan**, and the forest patches around **Amed**, the woodpecker continues to drum — a heartbeat of endurance in a changing land.

*In the walnut grove of Barzan,*
*the woodpecker sings with its beak —*
*not for glory, but for love of the trees*
*that give him a home and a song.*

## 🕊️ 🪶 1.30- Qaju / Qajû / Qaco / Qacoû (قاجوو / قاجۆ / قاجو / قاژو) — Raven / Crow (Corvus corax)

**Qaju — The Black-Winged Guardian of the Kurdish Mountains**

Qaju — the great Raven of Kurdistan — is a bird woven into the memory of every mountain, every valley, every wandering road. From the snowy peaks of Qandil, Amed, Wan and Hakkarî to the warm plains of Kirkuk, Rojava, Şengal and the wooded hills of Silemani, this shadow of intelligence moves across the land with quiet confidence and ancient presence. Big and powerful, with wings that stretch more than a meter wide, Qaju's feathers shine like polished obsidian, catching hidden colours of blue, violet, and green whenever sunlight touches them.

Among all the birds of Kurdistan, none is more mysterious or more clever. Ravens solve puzzles, hide food in secret places, use tools, and even recognise human faces — and never forget a kindness or a threat. They teach their young, play in the wind, and watch the world below from high rocks, cliffs, and old ruined towers that have stood for centuries. Qaju adapts to every landscape — forests, plains, farmlands, snowfields, deserts — carrying the same watchful eyes and sharp mind wherever it goes.

Their voice, the deep "kraaw, kraaw!" rolling down through valleys, is known to every shepherd. It is the call of warning, of awareness, of truth. Kurds say the raven speaks with knowledge older than the mountains themselves. They fly not only with purpose, but with joy — twisting in the air, gliding along cliff edges, performing quiet acrobatics that only the keenest of eyes catch. A raven in flight is both a dancer and a guardian.

Each spring, Qaju returns to its hidden nesting places — high on cliffs, inside mountain caves, in tall trees, or sometimes in ancient watchtowers left by forgotten kingdoms. There, with sticks, wool, and soft grasses, it builds a strong nest. The female lays her blue-green eggs, marked with brown speckles like small pieces of the sky. Ravens choose one partner for life. They raise their young together, protect them fiercely, and

return every year to the same beloved place. Some live twenty years or more, carrying decades of memory beneath their wings.

Ravens do not migrate. They stay in Kurdistan through burning summers and deep winter snows — a year-round companion to shepherds, farmers, travellers, and the quiet wanderers of the land. They feed on fruits, grains, insects, and small animals, but their most important role is cleansing the land by eating carrion, ensuring that wilderness remains healthy and balanced. Nature depends on Qaju more than people realise.

In Kurdish tradition, Qaju is no bird of darkness. It is a symbol of wisdom, loyalty, and awareness — a watcher of the mountains, a guide for those who lose their path. Old stories say that ravens warned shepherds of wolves, led travellers away from danger, and carried the voices of the fallen to the high peaks where spirits rest. Many villages believe that the raven is able to see what humans cannot, moving between the visible world and the quiet realm of memory.

Yet even the raven faces threats — poisoned fields, disappearing trees, war explosions that echo through its valleys, and old superstitions that unfairly fear the bird. Still, Qaju endures. Its intelligence is armour, its adaptability a shield. Wherever the land rises into cliffs or spreads into open plains, the raven is there — a silent witness to the history, courage, and suffering of the Kurdish people.

Qaju's wings cast a shadow not of fear,
but of truth.
A reminder that the land remembers everything,
and so does the raven.

## 🐓 1.31- Qelîç / Qizqele / Qijqele (قەلیچ / قزقەلە / قژقەلە / قەلەباچکە) — Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*)

The Black-and-White Storyteller of the Mountains and Valleys**

The Eurasian Magpie, known across Kurdistan as **Qelîç**, is one of the cleverest and most expressive birds of our land — a restless, talkative spirit found from the rugged slopes of **Amed, Botan, Şirnex, Wan, and Agirî** in the north all the way to the warm plains of **Hewlêr, Slemani, Kerkuk, Ilam, Kermashan, and Sina**, and through the river belts of **Qamişlo, Dêrik, Afrin, Kobanê, Halabja, Zaxo, Koya**, and the fertile valleys of **Sirwan** and **Little Zab**.
Wherever there are orchards, figs, walnuts, poplars, and the smoke of small Kurdish houses, Qelîç is there — watching, learning, speaking, and remembering.

Its feathers shine like polished stone — **black, white, and flashing blue-green** under the Kurdish sun. Its long tail swings behind it like a proud banner, and its confident walk gives it a personality bigger than its small body. Qelîç lives close to people, nesting in high fig trees, poplar groves, thorny bushes, or even electricity poles overlooking farms and villages. Curious by nature, it hops across rooftops and gardens with the bravery of a creature that has known Kurdish homes for thousands of years.

The magpie's voice is unmistakable — a sharp, chattering **"chak-chak-chak!"** that echoes through orchards at dawn. It never stays silent. It talks to its partner, warns others of danger, scolds intruders, imitates other birds, and sometimes even copies the sounds of Kurdish tools or children. Qelîç is a thinker and a trickster; it remembers faces, follows shepherds, hides shiny objects under stones, and returns days later to check on them. Villagers say it "never forgets what it sees," and old Kurdish tales call it **the black-and-white storyteller of the trees**.

Qelîç is loyal to its mate for life. Every spring, the pair builds a large domed nest of sticks, mud, and hair — a masterpiece of patience — high in a tree where they raise 5–8 chicks. By early summer, the young birds join their parents in noisy family groups, filling the valleys with chatter as they explore the world together.

Unlike many birds, the magpie does not migrate. It stays in Kurdistan through all seasons, from snowy mountainsides near **Hakkarî** and **Şax** to the warm orchards of **Rojava** and the plains of **Garmîyan**. It moves only slightly when food is scarce, gliding with strong wings from field to field, searching for insects, grains, fruits, and the occasional unlucky mouse.

Qelîç lives side-by-side with Kurdish families. Farmers welcome it for eating pests, while children laugh at its boldness. Yet in folklore it holds a deeper meaning: a **messenger**, a **trickster**, a **warning spirit**, and sometimes a **bearer of news**, depending on the direction it flies or the sound it makes. Some elders say that "Qelîç brings the truth, not comfort," and when it lands alone on a roof, people pause and listen.

Modern life has not been kind to it — old trees are cut, farms are polluted, and war scars many landscapes — but still, the magpie endures. It adapts, learns, and survives, as if its intelligent eyes and strong memory carry the resilience of the Kurdish people themselves.

**Clever and bold**, Qelîç watches the world from the fig tree,
a small bird with a large spirit —
the storyteller that remembers everything
and forgets nothing.

Clever and bold, it watches from the fig tree —
a black-and-white storyteller
that never forgets what it has seen.

## 🐓 1.32 — Qele Sabune / Qajuî Reş-Spî ( قەڵە سابوونە / قاژووی ڕەش-سپی ) — The Black-and-White Raven of Kurdistan. Hooded Crow (Corvus cornix)

**Qaju Reş-Spî — The Hooded Crow of Kurdistan**

The **Qaju Reş-Spî**, the black-and-white crow of Kurdistan, is one of the most adaptable and intelligent birds in the Kurdish homeland. It lives everywhere — from the snowy heights of **Amed, Wan, Botan, and Dersim**, to the fertile plains around **Hewlêr, Silemani, and Duhok**, and across the towns, riverbanks, and farmlands of **Rojava, Urmia, Mahabad, and Kermashan**. Wherever Kurds live, work, harvest, or wander, the Hooded Crow is never far away — a clever, watchful companion of the land.

Medium-sized but powerful, this crow measures **44–50 cm**, with wide wings of **90–102 cm**, and weighs nearly half a kilogram. Its plumage is a striking contrast of soft grey and glossy black — a pale body wrapped in a dark hood of feathers, shining deep green and blue under sunlight. Walking confidently across fields and orchards, it appears almost like a judge of the land, half shadow and half light.

Though often seen around villages and farms, the Qaju Reş-Spî is a bird shaped by mountains and rivers. It forms small family groups, solves complicated problems, and watches everything with sharp intelligence. Shepherds often say, “The crow sees what humans forget,” and indeed, this bird remembers faces, places, and dangers with remarkable skill. It has been seen dropping nuts onto stones to break them, using tools, and even working with other crows to find food. Its voice — a deep cracking **“kraaa-ak, kra-aak!”** — carries across fields like a warning, a greeting, or sometimes a playful challenge.

In early spring, the Hooded Crow builds a large nest of sticks, wool, and grass high in trees, cliff edges, or abandoned buildings. The female lays **three to five** pale green eggs, speckled with brown, and both parents defend their nest with fierce loyalty. The

chicks grow quickly, staying with the family through summer and learning the secrets of survival: where to find insects, how to open hard shells, and how to read the sky.

Most Qaju Reş-Spî remain in Kurdistan all year, even during harsh winters. In the coldest months, they gather in great communal roosts — hundreds, sometimes thousands — forming tight-knit groups that sleep together for warmth and protection. By day they travel between fields, riverbanks, and villages, feeding on whatever the land offers: insects, grains, fruit, small animals, carrion, or human scraps. In doing so, they clean the environment and keep ecosystems balanced, becoming quiet caretakers of the land.

In Kurdish culture, the Hooded Crow carries deep symbolic meaning. Its dual colours — black and white — represent **truth, judgment, and the border between worlds**. Many villagers believe that when Qaju Reş-Spî circles overhead with loud cries, it is warning of a coming storm, a wandering predator, or unexpected visitors. Others say it protects the land by announcing danger before any human senses it.

Despite its strength, the Hooded Crow faces growing threats: poisoning campaigns, habitat loss, conflict with farmers, pollution, and the destruction of old nesting sites in war-affected regions. But its intelligence, resilience, and ability to live alongside humans allow it to endure where many other birds disappear.

Today, as it walks the quiet fields of dawn or glides over river valleys with steady wings, the Qaju Reş-Spî remains a symbol of awareness, adaptability, and the ancient memory of Kurdistan — a dark-hooded guardian moving silently between mountain and village, between past and present.

*Across the silent fields it walks, half shadow, half light,*
*its cry carving truth through the early morning air.*
*Qaju Reş-Spî watches the land with ancient, patient eyes —*
*a quiet guardian where mountain and memory meet.*

## 1.33. Qaju Dinduk Sur / Qajî Dinduk Sure

## (قاژوو دندووک سوور / قاژی دندووک سووره) — Red-billed Chough (Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax)

The **Qaju Dinduk Sur**, the Red-billed Chough of Kurdistan, is a bird shaped by wind, stone, and ancient silence. Known in Kurdish as the “black bird of the cliffs,” it glides above monasteries, rocky fortresses, and forgotten shrines, a bright red beak cutting through the mountain air like a stroke of fire. Slimmer and more graceful than a raven, it is a dancer of the high winds, a restless spirit that never abandons the heights.

This elegant bird measures **37–41 cm**, with wide wings of **70–90 cm**, its entire body dressed in glossy black that shines blue in sunlight. Its curved crimson beak and red legs give it a noble, almost mythical appearance — as if it carries the memory of ancient Kurdish mountains in its feathers.

The Qaju Dinduk Sur lives across all four parts of Kurdistan, wherever stone rises sharply into the sky. In Bashûr, it circles the peaks of **Amedi, Akre, Rawanduz, Soran**, the high ridges of **Qandil, Bradost, Halgurd–Sakran**, and the rugged valleys of **Zêwî, Spindar, Sharya**. In Rojhilat, its voice echoes through **Hawraman, Shaho, Paveh, Merîwan**, the rocky faces of **Sine, Kirmashan, Ilam, Luristan**, and the high cliffs surrounding **Asnav, Bane**, and the **Urmia Basin**.
In Bakur it is woven into the Taurus highlands, from **Hakkari, Colemêrg, Şırnak, Botan**, up to **Wan, Bitlis, Agirî (Ararat)**, even the stone monasteries of **Mêrdîn**. In Rojava, it sweeps over the mountain edges of **Afrin, Shiye, Cindirês**, the rocky plateaus of **Kobanê**, and the foothills near **Derik**.

Wherever cliffs stand high and the air is thin, the Qaju Dinduk Sur appears — a black wing against ancient stone.

It loves places that humans rarely reach:
sunlit rock faces, steep ravines, alpine pastures, cave mouths, and ruined towers

swallowed by time. With the full force of mountain winds beneath it, the chough performs acrobatic flights — loops, sharp dives, sudden twists — a display unmatched by most birds in Kurdistan. Its cheerful call, **“chee-ow, chee-ow!”**, echoes across valleys like laughter carried by the wind.

Its curved red beak is perfect for probing soil and lifting stones to uncover insects, beetles, and larvae. It follows livestock as they graze, picking small creatures stirred up by hooves, and in summer it feeds on berries and seeds scattered across high pastures.

When spring arrives, the Qaju Dinduk Sur searches for a hidden place to raise its young. It nests inside cliff crevices, monastery walls, abandoned towers, and old stone houses that cling to mountain edges. Using twigs, wool, moss, and hair, it builds a soft bowl where the female lays **four or five speckled eggs**. Both parents care for the chicks with tenderness, and family groups often remain together until late summer, flying as one through the blue mountain air.

In Kurdish memory and folklore, the Qaju Dinduk Sur is known as **Pêyamewê Çiyayê — the Messenger of the Mountains**.
It is believed to carry prayers between earth and sky, to guard sacred places, and to warn shepherds of changing weather. Dervishes of old said its bright red beak glowed because it once drank from the hidden springs of paradise. Shepherds say its arrival in early spring is a sign that pastures will renew and the highlands will awaken.

Though still widespread, the chough faces growing threats: quarrying that destroys cliffs, disturbance around ancient monasteries, the loss of traditional grazing lands, and increasing pressure from tourism and rock climbing. Like many mountain birds, it depends on open alpine terrain and quiet, undisturbed stone.

Yet, in the vast stretches of **Zagros, Taurus, Qandil, Hawraman, and Ararat**, the Qaju Dinduk Sur continues to dance upon the wind — a guardian of sacred heights, a bright flame against dark stone.

*Black wing against ancient stone,*
*red fire upon the wind —*

*it dances above the ruins,*

*keeper of the mountain's soul.*

## 🕊️ 1.34. Kotir / Koter / Kotêr / Kotar (کۆتار / کۆتێر / کۆتەر / کۆتر) — Dove / Pigeon (Columba livia)

**Kotir – The Bird of Peace**

The **Kotir**, meaning *the bird of peace* in Kurdish, is one of the most beloved and familiar birds of all Kurdistan. It thrives in Erbil, Amedi, Mahabad, Rojava, Botan, and throughout the mountains, plains, and villages of Duhok, Silemani, Şirnex, Koya, Sine, and Wan. Few birds have lived so closely beside Kurdish people for as long as the dove. Moving freely between wild cliffs and village rooftops, Kotir has become a symbol woven deeply into Kurdish life.

Medium-sized and graceful, Kotir measures a little over thirty centimetres in length, with strong wings capable of carrying it far across valleys and mountains. The wild form is soft slate-grey with two sharp black wing bars, a shimmering purple-green neck, and bright orange-red eyes that glow gently in the light. Domestic and feral Kotir appear in many colours — white, blue, speckled, brown, silver, and every shade between — living side by side with people in courtyards, orchards, and rooftops. In the wild it lives six to ten years, though many domestic birds can reach twenty with care and companionship.

Kotir is gentle, social, and deeply loyal. Its soft cooing — the familiar *grruu-grruu* — echoes across Kurdish courtyards, mosques, gardens, and early-morning rooftops, carrying a sense of comfort and belonging. Known for its strong and purposeful flight, it possesses one of the most extraordinary homing instincts in the bird world. Even after travelling great distances, Kotir finds its way back to the same rooftop or cliff ledge with astonishing precision. Many Kurdish families have long admired this loyalty, seeing in the dove a reflection of devotion, peace, and steadfast love.

Breeding takes place several times a year, especially through spring and summer. Pairs mate for life, building simple nests of sticks and feathers on cliffs, old buildings, rooftops, barns, or ancient stone walls. Each clutch contains two smooth white eggs,

and both parents take equal turns feeding their young with rich crop milk — one of the most nourishing foods known among birds. This shared care strengthens the lifelong bond between dove pairs, a trait celebrated in Kurdish folklore.

Kotir is non-migratory, remaining year-round in villages, cities, and mountains. Its flight is fast, direct, and remarkably accurate, a talent that once made it central to the ancient Kurdish and Mesopotamian tradition of messenger pigeons. Even today, homing pigeons can cross hundreds of kilometres, guided not by maps but by the earth itself.

No bird is more closely woven into Kurdish life than Kotir. It lives peacefully alongside people, nesting on rooftops, circling villages at dusk, and feeding around orchards, temples, and farms. In Kurdish culture, it symbolises purity, hope, loyalty, and blessing. White doves are released at weddings as a sign of new beginnings, and at memorials as a prayer for eternal peace. Mystics once believed Kotir carried whispered prayers to the heavens, and travellers saw it as a companion of the long road.

Though still abundant, Kotir faces modern pressures in urban regions, including pollution, loss of traditional nesting spaces, predator pressure, and disease among crowded flocks. Yet its adaptability keeps it thriving. Wherever Kurds build homes, villages, and gardens, Kotir remains — a timeless symbol of harmony between people and the sky.

It flies not for war, but for return —
over mountains, rivers, and dust —
carrying the soft voice of home
in the beating of its wings.

## 🕊️ 1. 35. Qumrî / Qumrîy Spî / Qumrîya Spî / Qumrîya Xezalî (قومری / قومریی سپی / قومریا سپی / قومریا خەزالی) — White Dove / Ring-necked Dove (Streptopelia risoria)

**Qumrî — The Dove of Peace of Kurdistan**

The **Qumrî**, lovingly known as the “Dove of Peace,” is one of the most gentle and graceful companions of Kurdish life. It lives beside people across all four parts of Kurdistan — among the gardens and courtyards of **Erbil, Duhok, Silemani, Garmian, Kalar, Koya, Halabja**, the rooftops and orchards of **Qamishlo, Amûdê, Hesekê, Kobanê, Afrin**, the quiet alleys of **Mahabad, Urmia, Sanandaj (Sine), Bokan, Kirmashan, Ilam**, and the timeless stone neighbourhoods of **Amed, Van, Mardin, Botan**, and **Hakkari**.
Wherever there are homes, mosques, orchards, and water, the Qumrî settles softly — a silent witness to human life.

It is a bird of humble beauty: **30–33 cm** long, with a smooth wingspan of **45–50 cm** and a gentle weight of **150–200 grams**. Its feathers are pale grey, cream, or white, glowing softly under morning light. The delicate black half-ring on the back of its neck gives the bird an air of quiet elegance, as if it carries a necklace of the sky itself. Calm, graceful, and loyal, the Qumrî walks slowly along garden walls and rooftops, nodding its head gently as if greeting the world.

At dawn and dusk, its familiar voice — a rhythmic, soothing **“coo-coo-coo-roo”** — drifts across courtyards and minarets. For many Kurds, this sound is the music of home: the voice of early morning peace, the background melody of prayer time, the soundtrack of village life resting after a long day. It is a bird that sings not loudly but deeply, pouring calm into the air with every soft phrase.
Wherever its voice is heard, the heart feels lighter.

The Qumrî builds its nests with simplicity and trust — a few twigs placed upon rooftops, window ledges, orchard branches, old beams, or the quiet walls of mosques. The female lays two pure white eggs, symbols of peace and purity. Both parents take turns warming them, and when the chicks hatch, the adults feed them with **"crop milk"** — a rare, soft, nourishing fluid produced in their throats. Their devotion to their young is gentle and constant, a small miracle repeated in countless Kurdish homes and gardens.
In safe places, the Qumrî can live **10–15 years**, a long and loyal resident of the yard.

Their flight is smooth, silent, and steady. They rarely travel far, spending their days wandering through fields, orchards, and village corners before returning faithfully to the same rooftop each evening. The Qumrî is a **non-migratory** bird, choosing to live its entire life in Kurdistan, staying close to the people who have cared for it for generations.

Few birds are woven as deeply into Kurdish life as this one.
Qumrî are released in weddings as symbols of blessing and new beginnings.
They gather in mosque courtyards, perched peacefully beside worshippers.
They appear in love songs, romantic stories, and gentle poems that celebrate loyalty and purity.
Many Kurdish families still scatter grains for them in the early morning, believing that feeding the Qumrî brings **bereket** — abundance, protection, and blessings to the home.

Though still common, the Qumrî faces the quiet pressures of modern life: the disappearance of gardens beneath concrete, pesticides that poison orchards, hunting in some rural areas, and the loss of nesting spaces in new buildings.
Yet, because it lives so closely with people, it endures.
Wherever a rooftop remains, wherever a garden wall stands, the Qumrî will come — a soft, white presence watching gently over the day.

*O Qumrî of the garden wall,*
*your song softens even silence —*
*the sound of peace between two hearts,*
*the white spirit of our homeland.*

## 🕊️ 1.36- Kotre Gaye / Kotre Gayî (کۆترە گایی / کۆترە گایە) — Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

**Kotre Gaye — The Great Wood Pigeon of Kurdistan**

The **Kotre Gaye**, literally “the cow pigeon” in Kurdish, is the largest and most majestic of all pigeons that live across Kurdistan. It is a gentle giant of the forests, orchards, mountains, and quiet valleys, seen from the oak hills of **Duhok, Amedi, Akre, Hewlêr and Silemani**, to the green belts of **Hawraman, Sine, Mahabad, Bokan, Kirmashan and Ilam**, and the wide plains of **Afrin, Qamishlo, Derik, Kobanê and Hesekê**, all the way to the wild forests of **Amed, Wan, Botan, Şırnak and Hakkari**.
Wherever old oaks stand, the deep voice of the Kotre Gaye is never far.

It is a bird of dignity — **40–42 cm** long, with a sweeping **70–80 cm** wingspan and a gentle weight of **500–600 grams**. Its feathers are soft grey-blue, glowing quietly in the morning light. On its neck rest two shining white patches like small moons, and across its wings runs a clean white band that flashes brilliantly as it flies. A coral-pink beak with a yellow tip and warm golden eyes complete its calm, stately appearance.
Among Kurdish pigeons, none is larger, none more serene.

In the early hours of dawn, its voice rises from the oak canopies — a deep, peaceful **“coo-woo-coo-coo”** that echoes through forests, orchards, and sleeping valleys. This sound carries the feeling of an old countryside morning: slow, steady, and full of calm.
The Kotre Gaye moves with quiet confidence, flying in loose flocks across the treetops, walking thoughtfully on the ground beneath walnut trees, or resting on tall oaks where it surveys the land with gentle patience. It is rarely startled, known for its calm heart and steady presence.
Wherever it lives, it brings a sense of peace to the landscape.

High in the branches of oaks, poplars, and walnut trees, the Kotre Gaye builds a simple nest of sticks — a home it returns to year after year. The female lays **two white eggs**,

and both parents warm them with devotion. Like doves, they feed their chicks with **“pigeon milk,”** a soft, nourishing fluid produced in their throats.
In the quiet safety of Kurdish forests, the Kotre Gaye may live **10–12 years**, a gentle elder of the treetops.

It is a strong and graceful flier. Its wings beat firmly, then open into smooth arcs as it glides over valleys and orchards. Some remain in their home forests all year, while others move gently with the seasons — descending to lower valleys in winter or rising toward cooler forests in spring. Their movements follow the rhythm of oak acorns, berries, and the changing winds.

For countless generations, the Kotre Gaye has lived close to Kurdish life.
Farmers hear its voice in spring and say the land is ready for planting.
Shepherds welcome its calm presence in the fields.
Its soft cooing is believed to bless orchards and bring harmony to the household.
It is a symbol of **rural peace, contentment, and natural balance**, the quiet companion of people who live close to the earth.

But even this gentle bird faces the pressures of modern times —
the loss of old forests, the cutting of ancient oaks, hunting in some regions, pesticides that poison orchards, and towns expanding into wild valleys.
Still, across much of Kurdistan, the Kotre Gaye remains abundant, its deep voice rising from the hills like an old prayer.

*You rise from the oak hills of Kurdistan,*
*wings white as prayer, voice deep as peace —*
*bearer of calm skies and grain-filled fields,*
*gentle heart of the homeland.*

## 🕊️ 1.37- Kotre Barîke / Kotre Barîk (کۆترە باریک / کۆترە باریکە) — Turtle Dove / Collared Dove (*Streptopelia turtur / Streptopelia decaocto*)

**Kotre Barîke — The Slim Dove of Kurdistan**

The **Kotre Barîke**, meaning *"the slim pigeon"*, is one of the most delicate and graceful doves of the Kurdish countryside. It moves with a softness that belongs to peaceful mornings, drifting like a whisper from orchard to courtyard.
Lighter and narrower than the great **Kotre Gaye**, it is the elegant, gentle spirit of village life.

This beautiful dove lives across **all four parts of Kurdistan**, from the orchards of **Duhok, Zakho, Erbil, Silemani and Koya**, to the soft fields of **Sanandaj, Mahabad, Sardasht, Kermashan and Ilam**, and the warm plains of **Afrin, Qamishlo, Kobanê, Derik and Amûdê**, all the way to the stone courtyards of **Amed, Mardin, Botan, Wan and Hakkari**.
Wherever a Kurdish home has a rooftop, a well, or a small orchard, the Kotre Barîke is never far.

It is a slender, elegant bird — **26–30 cm** long, weighing **120–150 grams**, with wings that open to **45–50 cm**. Its feathers are a soft sandy-grey or gentle pinkish-brown, catching warm tones under the sunlight. Around its neck lies the famous **black-and-white collar**, a necklace of nature, giving rise to its English name: **the Collared Dove**.
Its deep ruby-red eyes and poised posture make it one of the most peaceful birds of the land.

At dawn and dusk, its soft voice rises from rooftops, trees, and mosque courtyards — a rhythmic **"coo-roo-roo… grrr-grrr"** that settles over the fields like a sigh of calm. The Kotre Barîke glides between orchard branches, walks gently across village paths, and forms quiet, loyal pairs that stay together throughout the seasons.
Its presence brings the feeling of home — familiar, warm, and soothing.

Nesting close to humans, the female builds a simple platform of twigs on low orchard branches, house beams, or old stone walls. She lays **two pure white eggs**, and both parents share the duty of warming and feeding the chicks with **soft crop milk** — a warm, nourishing gift from their throats.
They live **6–10 years in the wild**, often raising several broods each spring and summer.

In flight, the Kotre Barîke is graceful and light — soft wingbeats, smooth glides, and nearly silent landings.
Most populations move gently with the seasons:
they descend to warm valleys in winter, return to orchards in spring, and some remain year-round near villages.
In many Kurdish regions, their arrival in **March and April** is seen as the return of **love, peace, and new life**.

No wild bird in Kurdistan lives closer to human hearts than the Kotre Barîke.
It rests on mosque domes, drinks from village wells, circles over grapevines, and perches on rooftops at sunset.
Kurdish families often throw handfuls of grain on the ground “for blessing,” knowing the dove will return.
It is a symbol of:

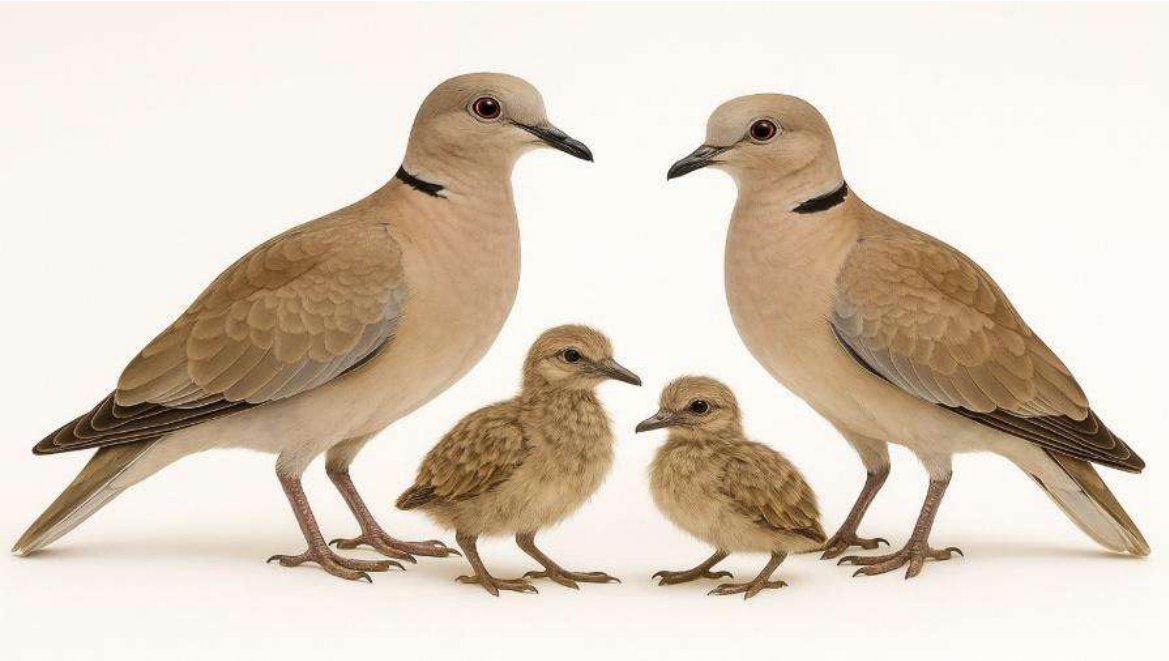
- love and loyalty
- peace and affection
- longing and memory
- the gentle voice of the beloved

Its soft cooing is woven into the soundscape of Kurdish life — the background music of childhood, prayer time, and quiet evenings.

But even this gentle dove faces the pressures of a changing world:
the loss of gardens, pesticides that kill seeds and insects, hunting in some villages, and the fast spread of concrete cities.

Despite these challenges, the Kotre Barîke remains one of the strongest survivors, thriving wherever Kurdish homes still open their windows to nature.

*O slim-winged wanderer,*
*your voice falls like a sigh upon the fields —*
*you carry love in your call,*
*and longing in your flight.*



## 🌧️ 1.38. Balinde Barane (باڵندە بارانە) — Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)

**Balinde Barane – The Bird of Rain**

The **Balinde Barane**, the "bird of rain," is one of the softest and most mysterious voices of spring in Kurdistan. Its call drifts through the valleys of Hawraman, Shaho, Soran, Amedi, and Botan, and carries across the Zagros oak belt, Rawanduz ridges, the foothills of Silemani, the valleys of Duhok, and the moist slopes of Wan and Rojhilat. Wherever the mountains breathe mist and the orchards glisten after rain, the Balinde Barane arrives like a wandering echo.

Slender and elegant, it measures a little over thirty centimetres, with narrow wings built for swift travel and a long tail marked with pale white spots. Its plumage is smooth grey, with a barred belly and a delicate yellow eye-ring that glows softly in the morning light. This quiet traveller lives six to eight years, moving gently between riverbanks, orchards, and hidden forest edges.

Its voice is one of the oldest sounds tied to Kurdish memory:
**"cuck-oo… cuck-oo…"**
a soft call that floats through the damp air after rain. Many Kurdish villages begin their spring not by the calendar, but by the first call of the Kewê Baranê — a sound that carries renewal, cleansing, and the awakening of the earth.

The bird itself is shy and rarely seen. It slips silently between branches, gliding swiftly from valley to valley, revealing its presence more through sound than sight. Its behaviour is secretive, its appearance fleeting, like a piece of rain-cloud given wings.

The Balinde Barane is also known for a remarkable strategy of life: it never builds its own nest. Instead, it lays its eggs in the nests of smaller birds — wagtails, warblers, pipits — shaping each egg to resemble the host's own. The unwitting foster parents raise the chick with devotion, feeding a young bird that grows faster and stronger than their own brood. This ancient, controversial method has fascinated people for

centuries, yet Kurds still admire the cuckoo for its mystery, beauty, and the hopeful music of its voice.

It is a bird of great journeys.
It arrives in March or April, following the rains up through Mesopotamia, and leaves again in late summer, travelling thousands of kilometres to winter in the warm heart of Africa. Its flight is swift and pointed, almost falcon-like, carrying it over river valleys and open plains with ease.

To Kurdish people, the Balinde Barane is much more than a migrant bird. It is a messenger — a companion of rain, a herald of farming seasons, a symbol of longing and renewal. Elders say:
**“When the Kewê Baranê sings, the earth begins to breathe again.”**
Its voice stirs farmers from sleep, reminds shepherds of changing seasons, and fills poets with the ache of return.

Yet this bird faces dangers. Its survival depends on the smaller birds that raise its young, and many of those species decline due to pesticides, habitat loss, and disrupted migration paths. Reedbeds shrink, orchards vanish, and the climate alters the timing of spring itself. But still, each year, the Balinde Barane returns — its voice drifting above the valleys like an echo of childhood, like a memory older than any story.

Its voice rides the wind after rain,
calling hearts awake —
a song of return,
born between the clouds and fields.

## 🐓 1.39- Pasar / Pasarî / Pasara / Çweleke Pasarî

### (پاسەر / پاسەری / پاسارا / چوێلەکە پاساری) — House Sparrow (Passer domesticus)

**Pasarî — The Little Heart of Kurdish Homes**

Pasarî, the House Sparrow, is the tiny heartbeat of Kurdish life — the bird that lives not beside us, but *with* us. From the stone alleys of Amed to the orchards of Hewlêr, from the rooftops of Silemani and Afrin to the courtyards of Sanandaj, Urmia, Kirkuk, Qamişlo, and every town of Rojava, Pasarî is everywhere. It asks for nothing, yet fills every home with life.

Small enough to sit in the palm of a child, Pasarî glows with warm brown wings, a soft grey crown, and bright, curious eyes that never stop watching the world. The males carry a proud black throat patch like a tiny badge of honour, while the females blend into grapevines and mudbrick walls with gentle earth-coloured feathers. Though it weighs almost nothing, it carries the story of the Kurdish household on its wings.

From dawn until sunset, Pasarî hops through courtyards, markets, orchards, bakeries, stables, and rooftops, living closer to humans than any other bird. It dust-bathes in village paths, steals crumbs from bakery doors, perches boldly on café tables in Amed, and flits between grape vines in Koya and Hawraman as if every home were its own. Its cheerful “chirp-chirp-chip!” is the morning prayer of Kurdish cities and the soundtrack of every village breakfast.

Pasarî is a creature of family. It raises its chicks beneath the roofs of Kurdish homes — inside old stones, under mud tiles, between grapevine shelters, or tucked safely beneath the beams of stables. It builds with whatever it finds: feathers, grasses, threads from carpets, pieces of wool, dried leaves. And it never leaves its people; even in the snow of Serhed, the winds of Hakkarî, and the bitter cold of Wan, Pasarî stays beside Kurdish homes, trusting humans like distant relatives.

No bird understands humans better. It knows where bread will be placed to cool, where animals are fed, where children leave crumbs of simit while playing. Some sparrows even learn the shape of familiar faces. And Kurdish families respond with tenderness: parents tell children “do not disturb the Pasarî nest — it brings blessing to the home,” and elders say that sparrows carry the warmth of God between their wings.

In Kurdish memory, Pasarî is the symbol of simple joy — the small, everyday miracle that reminds people to stay hopeful, humble, and grateful. It is the friend of the shepherd, the companion of the farmer, the guest of every courtyard. When war destroys buildings, Pasarî is always the first to return, rebuilding life with a few feathers and a few twigs, teaching us what resilience truly means.

But life has become harder for this tiny companion. Concrete walls leave no cracks for nests. Gardens disappear under new roads. Pesticides kill the insects it needs. Pollution chokes old neighbourhoods. And yet, even with fewer safe places, Pasarî refuses to leave its people. It survives among the broken bricks and new constructions, singing its bright little song: life continues.

Pasarî is more than a bird —
it is the echo of Kurdish mornings,
the laughter of children,
the warmth of home,
and the quiet reminder that beauty can live in the smallest wings.

Wherever Kurds live —
in cities, in mountain villages, in camps, in diaspora —
Pasarî follows.
It stays, it sings, it endures.
A tiny guardian of everyday life,
carrying joy from one rooftop to another.

## 🌾 1.40- Pasarî Wêran / Pasarî Çolge (پاساری وێران / پاساری چۆلگە) — Rock Sparrow (Petronia petronia)

**Pasarî Wêran — The Sparrow of the Ruins**

The **Pasarî Wêran**, the “bird of the ruins” or “sparrow of the wild stones,” is one of the quiet, enduring spirits of Kurdistan’s rugged landscapes. It lives where time seems to stand still — among rocky hills, broken village walls, dry cliffs, and the ancient terraces of **Şaho, Qandil, Hawraman, Amedi**, and the surrounding belts of the vast Zagros mountains. Small in size, only **14–15 cm** long and weighing just **25–30 grams**, this humble sparrow carries a strength far greater than its fragile frame. It is a survivor of harsh winds, hot summers, and silent winters — a tiny heartbeat echoing across stone and memory.

Its feathers are soft sandy-brown, streaked gently with grey and touched lightly with pale yellow along the chest. These colours blend seamlessly into weathered stone, abandoned walls, and sun-burnt cliffs, making the bird almost invisible to all but the most observant eyes. Pasarî Wêran is a master of living in forgotten places, moving gracefully among rocks and ruins where few other small birds can survive. In these quiet environments, its presence feels like an ancient echo — a reminder that life persists even in the loneliest corners of the mountains.

Its song is a simple, fragile melody — **“chirp-chirr-chirr”** — carried softly through the valleys and old stone passages. Though delicate, this call has an emotional weight, as if it carries the memory of those who once lived in these hills. The sparrow hops quickly along rocks, hides swiftly in crevices at the slightest danger, and often gathers near mountain springs with its small family groups. It feeds on insects, seeds, and tiny shoots that grow between stones, making a living from what the land offers freely.

In the warmth of Kurdish spring, the Pasarî Wêran begins its nesting season. The female finds hidden crevices in rocks, between dry walls, or beneath flat stones to protect her eggs from wind and predators. She lays **three to six speckled eggs**, and both parents

work tirelessly to feed the chicks. Once a pair finds a safe nesting spot, they return to it year after year, adding new layers of comfort to old cracks in the stone.
Their lives, usually **five to seven years**, are gently woven into the rhythm of the mountains.

This bird is deeply tied to Kurdish history and memory. It lives among the **ruins of ancient villages**, tucked inside cracks of mud-brick houses, along shepherd routes carved long before modern roads. Kurds often say that Pasarî Wêran is "**the last soul that remains in abandoned places**," staying faithful to the stones even after human footsteps fade. In folklore, it symbolises **patience**, **quiet courage**, **loyalty to homeland**, and the spirit of villages that refuse to disappear from the earth.

Yet even this resilient bird faces threats.
Old terraces and stone houses are being destroyed or replaced by concrete.
Pesticides reduce the insects it relies on.
War leaves behind empty villages where life struggles to return.
Still, among broken houses and forgotten cliffs, the Pasarî Wêran remains — a small survivor whose presence whispers that the land still remembers.

*Among broken stones it sings,*
*not to be heard — but to remain.*
*A voice of dust and dawn,*
*faithful to the ruins of time.*

## 1.41. Serçe / Pasarî Çiya / Pasarî Şaxî (سەرچە / پاساری چیا / پاساری شاخی) — Eurasian Tree Sparrow (Passer montanus)

**Serçe — The Little Sparrow of Kurdistan**

The **Serçe**, the beloved Eurasian Tree Sparrow, is one of the smallest yet most heart-warming companions of Kurdish life. Across all four parts of Kurdistan, it flutters through courtyards, orchards, wheat fields, and riverbanks — a tiny spark of movement that ties the land together from **Sine, Kirmaşan, and Luristan** to **Erbil, Kirkuk, Halabja, Koya**, from **Duhok, Amedi, Zakho** and the high valleys of **Rawanduz**, through **Ninewa, the Mosul plains**, the foothills of **Sinjar**, and all the way to **Afrin, Kobanê, Qamishlo, Heseke**, and the mountain towns of **Van, Hakkarî, and Şırnak**.
Wherever there are Kurdish hands planting seeds or Kurdish homes sharing bread, there is Serçe.

Slightly smaller than the House Sparrow, it measures just **12–14 cm**, with a wingspan no wider than **20–22 cm**, yet carries an energy far larger than its size. Both males and females wear the same warm colours: a chestnut-brown crown, a clean white face marked with a bold black cheek patch, soft brown wings streaked with darker tones, and a short, strong beak made for cracking seeds.
It is a humble bird, but a resilient one — thriving in mountain villages, crowded towns, orchards, stables, and fields alike, moving lightly among people as if it were part of the family.

Serçe is never alone. It lives in cheerful groups that gather under mulberry trees, along irrigation channels, beside stone walls, in the courtyards of mosques, or around livestock barns. Before even the rooster wakes, its soft **“chirp-chirp-chirp”** rises into the morning air, a simple but comforting music of Kurdish dawn. Through the day it hops between wheat fields, berry bushes, and orchards, feeding on small seeds, grains, and insects — especially caterpillars in spring, when it becomes a helper for farmers.

During cold winters, large flocks gather around barns and stored grain, bringing life and movement even to the snowy valleys of **Hawraman and Amedi**. In spring and summer, they return to gardens and farms, raising two or sometimes three families in a single season. Serçe uses whatever space it finds: tree hollows, stone crevices, roof tiles, gates, irrigation pipes, and old nests of woodpeckers. It lines its nest with grass, wool, feathers, and soft fibres, making a warm cradle for its **four to six speckled eggs**. After two weeks of incubation, the chicks hatch, and within fifteen days they flutter into the open world, joining the lively flocks of their kind.

Unlike long-distance migrants, Serçe remains close to home. It shifts gently with the seasons — moving to lower valleys during harsh winters and returning to orchards and farmlands as warmth returns. Its flight is rapid and fluttering, a dance of small wingbeats and quick glides, always close to trees, houses, and the ground it knows so well.

Few birds hold such a deep place in Kurdish daily life.
To Kurdish families, Serçe represents **simplicity, loyalty, community, and peace**.
Children scatter crumbs for it at dawn, believing the old saying:

**“Where Serçe sings, the house is blessed.”**

It nests fearlessly in walls, windows, stables, and gardens, living side by side with people in a harmony older than memory itself. Its presence is a sign of a healthy, living landscape — a small proof that nature and village life are still in balance.

Yet even this gentle bird faces modern dangers: the expansion of concrete cities, the disappearance of old orchards and mud-brick houses, heavy pesticide use that steals its insect food, and the competition of larger sparrows in urban areas. Still, across Kurdistan’s fields, plains, and fruit gardens, Serçe remains abundant — a bright voice of morning hope, fluttering from mulberry branches to rooftop corners with unstoppable life.

*In every courtyard’s breath of dawn,*
*it sings without pride —*

*small wings,*

*big heart,*

*voice of the morning bread.*

## 1.42- Çurra / Curre / Jorra (چوورە، جوورە) — Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

**The Voice of Spring in Kurdistan****

The Skylark, known to Kurds as **Çurra**, is a small, gentle bird whose voice has become the breath of spring across the whole of Kurdistan. From the wide meadows of **Hewlêr, Silemani, Botan, and Amed** to the fertile fields of **Garmian, Rojava**, the wind-touched plains of **Wan**, the rolling grasslands of **Kermashan**, and the endless wheat fields of the **Sirwan and Little Zab valleys**, Çurra rises each dawn to remind the land that life begins again.

It is a humble bird — soft brown, finely streaked, nearly invisible in the grass — yet it carries one of the most extraordinary voices in the natural world. Only 18–19 cm long and weighing less than 40 grams, it disappears into the earth when silent, and into the sky when singing. It lives 5–8 years, feeding on seeds, small insects, and the young shoots of spring.

But it is **its voice** that gives Çurra its place in Kurdish memory.

At sunrise, the male lifts himself from the fields, fluttering upward in slow spirals. Higher and higher he rises —
**100, even 150 meters into the blue** —
and there, suspended in the air like a prayer, he begins to sing.

A continuous, shimmering stream of sound pours from his tiny body — trills, whistles, rolling melodies that seem to fall like bright rain over the meadows. His song can last minutes without pause. Many Kurdish villagers say:

**“Çurra sings until it disappears into the sky.”**

And it is true. Often the bird is lost to sight long before the voice fades.

Çurra nests quietly on the ground, hidden among dry grass and soil. The female builds a small cradle of woven stems and lays her eggs gently inside — little gifts offered to the earth. Because they nest on open soil, Çurra depends on peaceful meadows and undisturbed farmlands, the same lands that Kurdish shepherds and farmers have walked for generations.

Skylarks do not migrate far. Most remain in Kurdistan through the seasons, travelling only from cold highlands to the softer plains of the south when winter grows harsh. They stay close to wheat and barley fields, shepherd paths, and grazing lands, always near the heartbeat of rural Kurdish life.

For Kurdish people, Çurra is more than a bird — it is a messenger of joy and freedom. Its voice tells farmers that spring has returned, that rain will bless the earth, that hope is rising again. It is the music of planting time, of early mornings, of green birth after winter's silence.

Yet, like many gentle beings, Çurra has been wounded by the modern world. Heavy pesticides, the destruction of grasslands, expanding machinery, and the scars of war have dimmed its numbers. But wherever the fields are left breathing — in **Amed's plains, Qaladze's soft valleys, and the wide lands of Garmian** — the Skylark still rises, still sings, still fills the morning air with a joy so pure it almost hurts.

When Çurra sings above the Kurdish earth, it is as if the land itself is singing —
a voice of hope, of light,
a voice that refuses to fall silent.

It climbs the wind above the barley fields,
singing as if to wake the sun —
a voice so small, yet strong enough
to lift the heart of the earth.

## 🌿 1.43. Çweleke Hêlîne / Balinde Hêlînê (چوێلەکە / باڵندە هێلینە) — Lark / Ground-nesting Finch (Alaudidae / Fringillidae)

**Çweleke Hêlîne — The Gentle Bird of Kurdistan**

The **Çweleke Hêlîne**, the "gentle bird," is one of the softest and most peaceful voices in the wide open lands of Kurdistan. It lives quietly in the meadows, plains, wheat fields, and foothills that stretch from **Erbil, Garmian, Slemani, and Halabja** through **Duhok, Amedi, Zakho, Botan, and Hakkarî**, and further east across **Wan, the Qandil foothills, Sine, Kirmashan, Ilam, and Sanandaj**. Westward, it moves through the broad plains of **Rojava — Qamishlo, Kobanê, Amûdê, Hesîçe** — where its delicate presence brings life to the fields.
Wherever the land is wide and quiet, the Çweleke Hêlîne appears like a whisper of peace.

It is a tiny bird, only **13–16 cm** long and light as a leaf, with soft sandy-brown or pale grey feathers that blend perfectly with dry grass and earth. Often it is seen hopping low among the stems, almost becoming part of the land itself. Its beauty is not in bright colours but in the calmness it carries — a stillness that reflects the gentle breath of Kurdistan's fields.

At dawn, when the first light touches the plains, the Çweleke Hêlîne begins its thin, rising song — a melody Kurdish villagers describe as "**a prayer lifted by the wind**." Its voice is delicate, almost fragile, yet it fills the early air with an honesty that farmers recognize as the start of a blessed day. At sunset, when the heat softens and the earth cools, it sings again, giving the fields a final breath of peace before night settles.
Kurdish farmers say, **"When the Çweleke Hêlîne sings, the fields live again."**

This gentle bird nests in the quiet warmth of spring, hiding its small cup of grass and feathers among stones or dry roots so that no one will disturb its family. The female lays **three to five speckled eggs**, and both parents feed the chicks with small insects and

seeds. Despite nesting on the ground — where danger is many — its camouflage protects it well. The young grow fast, learning to move softly through the grass like the wind itself.

The Kewê Hêlîne rarely leaves the land it knows.
It stays year-round in **Erbil, Slemani, Halabja, Duhok, Amedi, Botan**, and across **Rojava**, shifting only slightly into lower valleys during harsh winter snows. It flies in short fluttery arcs just above the grass, never far, never wandering.
It is a bird deeply tied to home — a creature whose entire life is shaped by the rhythm of Kurdish soil.

Because it lives so close to people, the Çweleke Hêlîne has long been considered a friend of farmers. It moves gently through barley and wheat fields, vineyards, lentil farms, orchards, and meadows without causing harm. Its modest song is loved by shepherds and early risers who hear it as a sign of simplicity, peace, and quiet hope.
In Kurdish poetry it is often called **"the soft heartbeat of the land."**

But even the gentlest bird faces dangers.
Modern farming machines destroy ground nests.
Pesticides silence entire fields.
Cities expand over meadows.
Grasslands are burned or overgrazed.
Yet in places where traditional Kurdish farming remains — in **Amedi, Halabja, Garmian, Botan**, and the wide plains of **Rojava** — the Çweleke Hêlîne continues to rise each morning, singing to the dawn as it has done for generations.

*From the dust of the valley you rise,*
*your song turning silence into gold —*
*O child of the earth,*
*keeper of morning dreams.*

## 1.44. Çweleke Avzêr / Qewê Deryayî / Qewka Kênarê Avê

## (قەوێ دەریایی / کەوکە کێنارە ئاوێ) — Common Sandpiper (Actitis hypoleucos)

**Çweleke Avzêr — The River Bird of Kurdistan**

The **Çweleke Avzêr**, the "Bird of the River," is one of the most joyful and gentle spirits of Kurdish waterways. Wherever a river sings, this little bird dances. From the icy streams of **Qandil** and **Şaho**, the rocky rivers of **Bradost, Amedi, Hakari, Wan**, and the deep-cut valleys of **Aras**, to the rolling waters of **Luristan, Wirme, Sine, Kirmashan, Ilam**, and the spring-fed terraces of **Hawraman** — its presence brings movement and life. It follows the flowing paths into **Rojava**, tracing the bright edges of the **Khabur**, **Derik**, **Dêrikê Çemê**, and the wetlands of **Hesekê**, and glides along the shores of **Dokan**, **Darbandikhan**, and **Urmia**.
Wherever water rushes over stone, the Çweleke Avzêr is there.

Small but full of energy, it measures just **18–21 cm**, light as a handful of river breeze. Its olive-brown back, white underparts, and the clean flash of white along its shoulder make it unmistakable as it runs along the stones. Its slim dark bill and alert black eyes give it a look of pure focus. But what makes it truly unforgettable is its constant tail-bobbing — a rhythmic motion that brings the riverbank to life. Kurdish villagers lovingly call it **Şil û Şap — the River Dancer**.

The Çweleke Avzêr lives on the thin line where flowing water meets land. It follows mountain torrents, quiet irrigation canals, stony lakeshores, and every curve of Kurdish rivers, from the **Little and Greater Zab** to the long body of the **Khabur**. With quick, delicate steps it runs along pebbles, searching for insects, tiny worms, water beetles, and the small crustaceans that hide among stones. When startled, it gives a sharp **"weet-weet-weet!"** and skims low across the water, the white in its wings flashing like sparks above the current.

This bird arrives in Kurdistan with spring, breeds through the warm months, then travels south in winter — to the Gulf, Arabia, and East Africa — following rivers the way old travellers followed the Milky Way.

When the time for nesting comes, the female makes a simple, hidden scrape among stones near the water's edge. She lays four pale speckled eggs, always placing them where the river can be heard but not reach. What is most remarkable is the speed of her young — within a single day of hatching, the chicks are already running, tiny shadows on the stones.
Both parents defend them fiercely, pretending to have broken wings to draw predators away. This ancient trick, performed in valleys for centuries, is one of nature's most tender lies — a lie told to save life.

In Kurdish folklore, the bird is known as **Dîlşadê Çemê**, the Happy Spirit of the River, and **Semaqçîya Avê**, the Dancer of the Waters.
Its constant motion is seen as a blessing — a reminder that clean water is alive, and that movement is the heart of life.
Fishermen often say, *"If the river bird runs ahead of you, today the water is generous."*
And in riverside poetry, this little bird is a symbol of purity, renewal, and the unbroken flow of time.

Though still common, the Çweleke Avzêr faces modern dangers — polluted rivers, dried wetlands, dams that silence the current, and the loss of natural riverbanks that it depends on. Yet in the places where water still runs free — in **Hawraman, Qandil, Wan, Rawanduz, Dukan**, and the bright valleys of **Rojava** — the bird continues its dance, tail flicking like a small flame in the wind.

*Between stone and stream it runs,*
*a soft call in silver water —*
*small wings touching the wind,*
*spirit of the river's heart.*

## 1.45- Çwelekei Kêvan / Tirînî Kêvan (چوێلەکەی کیوان / تیرینی کیوان) — Lesser Short-toed Lark (Alaudala rufescens)

**Çwelekei Kevan — The Little Bird of the Dry Plains**

The **Çwelekei Kevan**, the "Bird of the Dry Plains," is one of the smallest yet hardest of all Kurdish birds — a tiny survivor shaped by sun, dust, silence, and endless horizons. It lives where summer heat cracks the earth, where the wind carries the smell of salt and dry herbs, and where the steppe stretches wide beneath an unforgiving sky.
Only **12–13 cm** long and weighing barely **15–20 grams**, it seems fragile — but it is built of patience, resilience, and quiet power.

Its colours are the colours of the land itself:
• pale sandy-brown like sunburnt soil
• fine streaks like ripples of wind on dust
• soft, glowing underparts like morning light over the plains

With a short, strong bill made for prying seeds from cracked earth, it moves as if carved directly from the dry Kurdish steppe.

The Çwelekei Kevan lives close to the ground, running more often than it flies, hugging the earth like a shadow of the plains. When it finally lifts its wings, it rises lightly into the hot air and releases a delicate, tinkling song — **"prri-prri-trrlee"** — a voice that drifts like wind through dry grass, one of the few melodies that break the silence of Kurdistan's harsh summer.

It thrives in the open, treeless plains of **Luristan, Ilam, Kirmashan, Sine, Koya, Kifri, Kirkuk, Germiyan, Chamchamal**, the wide lowlands of **Sinjar and Mosul**, the plateau of **Hesêkê**, the countryside of **Mardin**, and the salt-touched edges of **Wan and Agirî**.
Wherever the land is dry and the sky is wide — there, the Çwelekei Kevan dances lightly between stones.

Its diet is simple and wise: tiny seeds, grass grains, ants, beetles, and the smallest desert insects. In drought years, it survives on dew and early-morning insects — a true master of the semi-desert.

When spring arrives, from **March to May**, it builds a small nest on the ground, hidden beneath clumps of grass or stones. The female lays **3–4 speckled eggs**, so perfectly camouflaged that they look like part of the land. Both parents guard their nest with fierce humility, pretending to be injured to lure foxes or crows away — brave hearts in tiny bodies.

To Kurdish shepherds, this bird represents something profound. They say:

**“It sings without shade and rests without water.”**
A tribute to its endurance under the burning sun.

In Kurdish folk tales and poetry, Çwelekei Kevan becomes a symbol of:
• the lonely traveller
• the forgotten voice of the plains
• the strength of simplicity
• the soul of endurance

Its quiet song has followed Kurdish nomads, shepherds, and travellers across the plains for countless generations.

Though still common across Kurdistan’s dry zones, it now faces the pressure of overgrazing, drought, farmland expansion, and the slow disappearance of natural steppe. But where the **Germiyan plains**, **Sinjar steppes**, and **Ilam–Kirmashan foothills** still breathe under open sky, this little bird continues to rise each spring — a small survivor in a vast and ancient land.

*Where the earth cracks and the wind forgets,*
*it sings — small, unseen,*
*a breath of life*
*in the stillness of dust.*

## 🏜️ 1.46. Tirînî Bîya (تیرینی بێیا) — Desert Lark (*Ammomanes deserti*)

**Tirînî Bîya — Desert Lark of Kurdistan**

The **Tirînî Bîya**, the “Desert Lark” of Kurdistan, is a small, warm-coloured bird shaped by sun, stone, and silence. It lives where the land seems empty, yet its presence turns emptiness into poetry. Across the dry plains of **Garmian** and the wide yellow spaces of **Badinan**, along the rocky skirts of **Koya** and **Kirkuk**, over the pale hills of **Şingal**, and throughout the quiet semi-deserts surrounding **Qamishlo** and **Hesekê**, this little lark is a constant and loyal companion of the land.

It measures just **14–16 cm**, with soft sandy plumage that blends with Kurdish soil — light brown, fawn, or dusty grey, like the stones of Hawraman under midday sun. Its bill is short and slightly curved, perfect for picking seeds and tiny insects from the dry ground. In these harsh landscapes where life appears scarce, the Tirînî Bîya survives with quiet determination, becoming a symbol of endurance, patience, and the silent strength of Kurdistan’s deserts.

When the desert still sleeps and the first light begins to touch the stones, the lark rises gently into the air and sings. Its voice is clear and flute-like, a soft melody carried by warm winds — *“tlee-tlee… tleeo-tleeo…”* Often it sings while hovering above a small rise, or gliding low between rocks, letting its song drip into the morning like cool dew. During the day it moves calmly on the ground, perching on sun-warmed stones, feeding quietly, or standing still as if listening to the wind. It is a bird shaped by heat and silence, perfectly adapted to survive where others cannot, even drinking droplets of dawn dew to stay alive.

Its nest is small and hidden — tucked beneath a stone, under a thorny shrub, or between tufts of dry grass. The female lays **3–5 pale, lightly speckled eggs**, and both parents guard the chicks with clever bravery, pretending to be injured to lead predators away. The Tirînî Bîya usually lives **4–7 years**, long enough to witness many summers of burning wind and many winters of quiet light.

Unlike many birds, the Desert Lark does not migrate. It stays year-round in the dry heartlands of Kurdistan, moving only slightly between rocky patches. Its flight is low, quick, and direct, but it prefers to run, hop, and glide among stones rather than fly long distances. It is a bird that belongs to the ground — to dust, to sun, and to the whispering plains.

The Tirînî Bîya lives close to Kurdish shepherds and nomadic families. It follows herds across the plains, rests on the tops of tents, and appears along old caravan routes as if remembering ancient travelers. Shepherds call it a friend of the desert, a soft companion that never abandons its homeland.
Its survival in harsh, waterless places has given it a special place in Kurdish imagination — the little bird whose song carries the soul of the dry earth.

Though still common, it faces new challenges: expanding towns, overgrazed plains, vehicles moving across quiet valleys, and droughts deepened by climate change. Yet the Tirînî Bîya remains, strong and unbroken, a small flame flickering in the wide emptiness.

*Among the stones of the silent plain,*
*it sings to no one —*
*yet its voice fills the emptiness*
*with the spirit of survival.*

## 🌾 1.47- Balinde Kirim Xore (باڵندە کرمخۆرە) — Hoopoe-lark (Alaemon alaudipes)

**Balinde Kirim Xore — The Bird of the Sand**

The **Balinde Kirim Xore**, the "bird of the sand," is one of the quiet treasures of Kurdistan's southern drylands — a delicate, desert-loving lark whose presence brings life to the warm, open plains of **Garmian, Halabja, Kalar, Kifri, Tuz Khurmatu, Chamchamal**, and the fertile **Shahrazur valley**, as well as the sun-burnt foothills that roll toward the deserts of **Rojava — Hesîçe, Qamişlo, and Kobanê**. It moves gracefully through these semi-desert landscapes, perfectly adapted to heat, dryness, and silence.

Elegant yet humble, the bird measures **17–20 cm**, with a wingspan of **35–40 cm**, its sandy-brown plumage patterned with soft streaks that melt into the colour of the earth. When it rises into the air, its wings flash white and black, brief bright banners glowing against the golden plains. Its long, slightly curved bill gives it a distinctive hoopoe-like silhouette, allowing it to probe deep into sand and soil in search of insects and hidden worms.
Balinde Kirim Xore survives where few others can — a true child of the Kurdish desert, carrying the calm endurance of the drylands in its small body.

Its voice is one of the most haunting sounds of the hot plains — a soft, flute-like melody:
**"whir-liu-liu-tu-tu…"**
Rising from sand ridges, from low rocks, or while circling high above the dunes, its song floats like a thin thread of water through the dry air. It sings at dawn and in the gentle winds of late afternoon, when the heat loosens its grip on the land. Shepherds in Garmian and Halabja still say, *"When Balinde Kirim Xore sings, even the desert wind pauses to listen."*

On the ground, the bird moves with quick, confident steps, often standing motionless for long minutes, merging perfectly with the land it belongs to. Then suddenly — a

flutter of wings, an arc of movement, and it rises into the warm sky as though lifted by the breath of the desert itself.

In spring, Balinde Kirim Xore breeds across the dry plains of **Halabja, Garmian, Kalar, Kifri, Sinjar (Şingal)**, the desert margins of **Rojava**, and the warm valleys of **Shahrazur**. The female prepares a simple, hidden nest — a gentle hollow lined with dry grass and small roots. She lays **three to four pale eggs**, the colour of sand. Both parents feed and guard their young, teaching them to find food in silence and heat.
For a small bird, Balinde Kirim Xore lives an impressive **seven to nine years**, surviving on insects for moisture and relying on its deep desert adaptations to endure scorching days.

This species rarely migrates. It remains year-round in the plains of **Garmian, Rojava, Sinjar, Kalar**, and the edges of **Kermashan**, moving only slightly when winter cold pushes down from the mountains. Its flight begins with a flutter, then rises smooth and steady, spiralling upward during its song-flight like a floating note carried by rising air. Few sights in the drylands are as graceful as its small body turning circles against the pale desert sky.

Kewê Kermê lives close to Kurdish life — near shepherd paths, mud-brick villages, fallow fields, and abandoned stone fences. It benefits from the open grazing lands and quiet desert edges shaped by generations of pastoral families. In Kurdish culture, it symbolises **endurance, quiet strength, balance, and dignity**.
People of Garmian and Halabja say, *“The desert keeps its secrets, but Balinde Kirim Xore sings them softly.”*

Yet the bird faces growing challenges: spreading desertification, drought, off-road vehicles disturbing nests, heavy grazing that strips vegetation, military activity across open plains, and the rising heat of climate change. Even so, it remains one of the most resilient birds of the Kurdish south — a symbol of life holding on in silence, surviving not through power, but through patience.

Wherever the plains of **Garmian, Sinjar, Halabja**, and the soft deserts of **Rojava** remain untouched, the delicate flight of Balinde Kirim Xore still rises above the sand, a gentle reminder that even the emptiest landscapes carry their own music.

*A song of sand and wind,*
*a traveller without shadow —*
*your voice turns emptiness*
*into melody.*

## 🥖 1.48- Çulaka Şêlaqe / Çwêleke Şêlaqe / Çulaka Rewrewe ( چوڵەکە ڕەوڕەوە، چوێلەکە شێلاقە) — Stone-curlew / Thick-knee (*Burhinus oedicnemus*)

**Shelaqe — The Lonely Watcher of the Dry Plains**

Across the dry plains and half-deserts of Kurdistan, where the earth cracks under summer heat and the horizon fades into trembling air, lives one of the most mysterious birds of our land — **Shelaqe**, the "bird of the dry plain." It moves silently through the wide, empty spaces of **Rojava, Şanlıurfa, Mêrdîn**, and the open southern valleys of **Garmian, the Khabur plains, the Jazira plateau, Zaxo**, and the dry belts near **Duhok**. Here, among stones, dust, and forgotten fields, Shelaqe stands like a spirit carved from the land itself.

Its long yellow legs carry it swiftly across stony soil, while its large golden eyes — bright as polished amber — glow with a sharp, ancient awareness. Everything about the bird matches the earth: brown streaked feathers that melt into sand, slow movements, and a stillness that feels almost supernatural. Many shepherds say Shelaqe does not walk across the plains — it *glides* through silence.

Most active after sunset, it comes alive under the moon. Its eyes are made for darkness; they shine with a quiet vigilance, reflecting firelight from shepherd camps or the pale shimmer of distant stars. For 8–10 years, Shelaqe wanders these plains, feeding on insects, beetles, worms, and small lizards — simple food taken gently from a land that gives little.

But it is **its voice** that binds Shelaqe to Kurdish memory.

On warm nights, when the plains are still and time slows, a long, haunting cry rises:
**"whi-whi-whi-eeoo…"**
It drifts across the darkness like a flute played by the desert itself. Sometimes it sounds like longing, sometimes like warning, sometimes like the echo of someone calling from very far away. Kurdish shepherds say the sound keeps travellers awake on long

journeys — not out of fear, but because it touches something old and lonely within the heart.

Shelaqe breeds directly on the ground, making only a shallow scrape among stones. Two or three eggs are laid openly on the earth, perfectly camouflaged, fragile as moonlight on sand. Both parents guard them carefully, for the plains hide many dangers. Their nests depend on silence — untouched land, fields not ploughed at night, valleys not disturbed by machines or war.

Although Shelaqe can fly, it rarely does. Its wings flash white and black only for a short moment, usually when escaping danger. It prefers to run — fast, graceful, almost soundless — a true creature of the open plains.

Shelaqe avoids busy villages, but lives peacefully beside shepherd lands and abandoned farms. It is often heard by Kurdish herders resting with their flocks under the stars. In old stories, Shelaqe is remembered as:

- **the lonely watcher of the plains**
- **the singer of the moonlit night**
- **a guardian spirit of silence**
- **a symbol of solitude, endurance, and patience**

Some elders say that Shelaqe sings to the moon so the night will not forget the earth.

But threats have grown: expanding agriculture, tractors crossing breeding grounds, night hunters, off-road vehicles, military noise, and the slow destruction of semi-desert habitats. Each of these breaks the silence that Shelaqe needs to survive.

And yet… even today, when the sun sinks behind the hills of **Jazira** and the stars rise over the plains of **Garmian**, the golden-eyed bird still stands motionless, guarding its land. When the night deepens, its voice rises once more — soft, echoing, ancient.

A song for the lonely places.

A song for the desert moon.

A song for Kurdistan.

Beneath the stars of Rojava,

a voice calls from the stones —

lonely, soft, and timeless,

like the desert remembering its dream.

## 🌾 1.49- Balindeî Kurdî / Çwêlekei Kurdî (کەفێ کوردی، چوێلەکەی کوردی) — Kurdish Wheatear (*Oenanthe xanthoprymna*)

The Small Bird That Carries the Colour of the Homeland**

The Kurdish Wheatear, known as **Çwelekeî Kurdî**, is a tiny but radiant bird born from the stones, winds, and sun of Kurdistan. It lives in the rocky hills and high plateaus of **Mokrian, Halabja, Qandil**, and the wide, breathing grasslands of **Sine, Hawraman, Sirwan, Koya, Garmian**, and the stony belts of **Şarbaz–Ushnaviyeh**, where scattered rocks and wild shrubs create the world it loves.

It is only 15–16 cm long, weighing no more than 20–25 grams, yet it carries the colours of Kurdistan itself — **warm earth browns, soft greys, and a bright orange rump that flashes like a fire at sunset**. The male wears a bold black mask and dark wings that shine against pale feathers, while the female is dressed in gentler shades of brown, blending beautifully with the land.

Çwelekeî Kurdî lives close to the ground, dancing between stones, hopping over dry grass, and watching the world from low perches. It feeds on insects and spiders found beneath stones warmed by the Kurdish sun. Though small, its spirit is large — confident, alert, and full of life.

When spring returns to Kurdistan, its voice rises over the hills:
**“tsip-tsip-trr-wee!”**
A cheerful, rising melody that echoes off cliffs and valleys, greeting shepherds at dawn and blessing the new season. It flicks its tail, darts from rock to rock, and watches gently as farmers walk past. It is a familiar companion of quiet mornings, lonely paths, and mountain breezes.

Every year, this brave bird returns home in March after surviving the long winter in distant Arabian deserts. It builds its nest under stones or inside small crevices, hidden safely from predators and storms. The parents feed their chicks with tenderness,

teaching them to perch on the rocks and read the wind the same way generations have done before.

Çwelekeî Kurdî is a bird that chooses home — always.
It leaves, but it always comes back.
For this reason, Kurdish people see it as a symbol of **hope, endurance, and belonging**.
Many say that if this small bird can cross deserts and return to its mountains, then no distance is too far, and no separation is forever.

Though not endangered, its world grows thinner each year — grasslands drying, stones removed for roads, valleys scarred by war, and shrubs grazed to dust. Yet even so, this little guardian of the mountains survives, hopping lightly among the rocks as if whispering:

**“This land is ours — and I will always return.”**

On the stone walls of Qandil,
it perches —
a flame of the mountains,
carrying the heart of Kurdistan on its wings.

## 🐥 1.50. Hewit Rengine / Hewit Rengîn / Hewit Rengên

## (حەوت ڕەنگینە / حەوت ڕەنگین / حەوت ڕەنگێن) — Goldfinch (Carduelis carduelis)

**Hewit Rengine — The Small Yellow Light of Kurdish Gardens**

Hewit Rengine, “the small yellow one,” is a tiny jewel of Kurdish nature — a bird so delicate and bright that it seems painted by the morning sun itself. From the gardens of Hewlêr and Silemani to the orchards of Amed, Urmia, Duhok, Rojava and the warm plains of Kermashan, its soft colours and pure voice have been part of Kurdish village life for as long as anyone remembers. Wherever thistles bloom and wildflowers sway, Hewit Rengine flutters like a spark of living gold.

Small enough to disappear inside a handful of leaves, it carries the colours of joy: a bright red face, a black-and-white crest, warm brown on its back, and a flash of yellow on its wings that glimmers every time it flies. It perches lightly on thistles and grape vines, picking tiny seeds with its fine, pointed beak, moving with the gentleness of a leaf touched by the wind.

But it is the voice of Hewit Rengine that Kurds cherish most. Its song — soft, flowing, musical, like a string of tiny bells — drifts across orchards and village gardens at dawn, turning the early light into melody. Many families say that when this bird sings near your home, peace will follow. Children grow up hearing its sweet, tumbling notes while playing under apricot trees. Elders listen to its voice in the evening and feel their hearts settle.

Hewit Rengine lives close to people but always keeps a little distance, choosing the quiet corners of life: the edges of orchards, the tops of vineyard posts, the thistle patches beside irrigation channels, the fig trees growing behind stone houses. In small flocks, they flutter through Kurdish fields like sparks of colour, dancing from branch to branch with endless energy and softness.

In spring, when the land turns green and the orchards awaken, the goldfinch begins its delicate craft — building a tiny, perfect nest high in a shrub or grape vine. Woven with plant fibres, soft feathers, and even spider silk, the nest is so fine that it looks almost embroidered. Hidden deep among leaves, it holds the fragile beginning of new life. And from this small cradle, the next generation of Kurdish song begins.

For centuries, Hewit Rengine has been a symbol of beauty, freedom, and good fortune. Its colours were believed to be touches of divine joy; its voice, a blessing carried on the wind. Kurdish poets praised it as the singer of pure heart, the small bird whose songs clean the soul. Villagers say the goldfinch never lies — its voice is always honest, always hopeful.

Yet even this gentle creature faces hardship. The trapping of wild birds for cages, the loss of orchards and thistle fields, the spread of concrete, and the silence caused by pesticides have dimmed its presence in many places. Some valleys that once glittered with goldfinch flocks now fall quiet.

But Hewit Rengine is a survivor. Where a thistle grows, where a grape vine curls toward the sun, where a family keeps a small garden behind their home, the tiny singer returns — bright, soft, faithful. It remains one of the most tender symbols of Kurdish land:
a whisper of beauty,
a flutter of colour,
a voice of pure hope in the morning air.

Wherever Kurds plant trees, tend gardens, and keep the land alive,
Hewit Rengine will stay —
singing the spirit of Kurdistan in a language made only of light.

A spark of sunlight with wings,
it sings not for praise,
but for joy —
reminding hearts that beauty is its own reason to exist.

## 🐤 1.51- Zerde Cûre / Zerde Çûre (زەردە چوڕە / زەردە جوڕە) — Bunting Family (Emberizidae)

**Zerde Cûre — The Little Yellow Light of Kurdish Fields**

Zerde Cûre, “the little yellow one,” is one of the softest and happiest voices of Kurdish nature — a tiny spark of sunlight hopping among the hills, orchards, and golden fields of Hewlêr, Duhok, Rojava, Kermashan, Silemani, Amed, Wan, and the open farmlands of Kirkuk. Wherever wildflowers bloom or wheat waves in the wind, this gentle bird is close by, carrying the colours of morning on its wings.

The male glows like a drop of early sunlight — bright golden head and chest, warm chestnut stripes, and brown wings kissed by the earth. The female, quieter in tone, melts beautifully into dry grass, hedges, and stone-lined fields. Together they flutter lightly across thistle patches, river-edge bushes, vineyard borders, and shepherd paths, moving like tiny lanterns in the breeze. They are small — hardly the length of a hand — but full of life, hope, and colour.

At sunrise, Zerde Cûre fills the air with its cheerful music — a rhythmic “tsii-tsii-tsii-choo-chip!” heard across quiet Kurdish mornings. It is a song that farmers recognise instantly, a melody woven into spring planting and summer harvest. Often these birds gather in small groups, following shepherd flocks or hopping along field edges, eating grains, seeds, small insects, and whatever the season offers. Many say they are the little guardians of the crops, picking harmful pests and blessing the fields simply by their presence.

When spring arrives, the female builds a small hidden nest in the grass or inside low bushes — a delicate cup woven from stems, moss, soft fibres, and the earth’s kindness. Three to five tiny eggs lie inside, protected by both parents who take turns feeding their young. Their nests are so well hidden that even experienced shepherds

rarely find them. Zerde Cûre lives a simple but beautiful life of five to seven years — short in time, rich in brightness.

Though most remain across Kurdistan all year, some wander to lower valleys in harsh winters, fluttering like golden sparks across the land. Their flight is light and bouncing, dipping close to the ground, always with a short call as if laughing gently with the wind.

Zerde Cûre has long been a friend of Kurdish farmers. It perches on vineyard fences, dances along wheat rows, and follows livestock, picking leftover seeds with happy energy. In Kurdish tradition, this small golden bird is a symbol of happiness, morning light, abundance, and good fortune. Many villagers believe that seeing Zerde Cûre before planting brings a blessed harvest — a sign that the land is awake and ready to give.

Yet, like many gentle creatures, it faces dangers: pesticides that steal its food, shrinking farmlands, disappearing hedgerows, urban expansion, and the scars of war on fields and plains. Even so, wherever the morning sun touches the earth, Zerde Cûre rises to sing — a tiny golden spark, glowing with hope at the heart of Kurdistan.

And at sunrise, its voice feels like the first warm breath of spring.

## 🐤 1.52- Cûreî Deshtakî / Çureî Deştekî (جووڕەی دەشتەکی / چۆرەی دەشتەکی) — Wagtail (Motacilla alba / flava)

**Çureî Deştekî — The Little Dancer of the Kurdish Fields**

Çureî Deştekî, “the little bird that wags its tail,” is one of the gentlest and most joyful companions of Kurdish lands. From the lively streams of Amed to the quiet farmlands of Hewlêr and Koya, from the riverbanks of Duhok and Silemani to the wide plains of Rojava and the green valleys of Kermashan and Wan, this tiny bird sprinkles light wherever it goes. Slender and delicate, it moves with a grace that seems almost delicate — yet its spirit is bright, quick, and full of life.

Two forms of this little dancer wander through Kurdistan: the White Wagtail in its black, white, and grey suit, and the Yellow Wagtail glowing like a drop of sunlight in olive grass. Whichever appears, one thing is always the same: the gentle rhythm of its tail, lifting and lowering like a heartbeat, like a small dance offered to the world. Even when the land grows quiet, Çureî Deştekî is never still — always walking, always looking, always wagging its tail as if keeping time to an invisible melody of nature.

Its voice is a quick, cheerful “chit-chit-chee!”, a tiny spark of happiness heard along riverbanks at dawn. It follows sheep herds, ploughing oxen, and wandering shepherds, catching tiny insects stirred by hooves and footsteps. Children across Kurdish villages love this bird — its innocence, its soft colours, its friendly way of hopping close without fear. It is as much a part of the land as the wheat fields, the stone walls, or the cold mountain springs.

When spring returns to Kurdistan, so does Çureî Deştekî. It builds its nest in the quietest corners of village gardens, between stones, under roofs, beside small streams, or in the cracks of old farm walls. The parents bring life to their young with tireless dedication, fluttering back and forth with insects in their beaks. Sometimes a whole family of wagtails can be seen dancing together in the morning sun, tails rising and falling like soft Kurdish music made visible.

In Kurdish tradition, Çureî Deştekî carries meanings far bigger than its tiny body. It is the bird of purity and renewal. The bird that blesses fields and water. The one whose appearance before planting season is said to promise a year of good harvest. Farmers greet it with a smile, shepherds nod to it as to an old friend, and even elders say that no home is empty if this little dancer visits the doorstep.

Yet, like many gentle beings, it faces dangers — polluted rivers, shrinking meadows, pesticides that steal its food, and the noise of war that frightens it from old nesting grounds. But the wagtail endures, adapting, returning, filling the land with its soft presence again and again.

Wherever Kurdish water flows and crops grow, Çureî Deştekî dances —
a tiny messenger of spring,
a drop of innocence,
a quiet blessing that carries light upon its wings.

## 🌾 1.53- Rewrewei Dim Awan / Rewreweya Dem Avan

## (ڕەوڕەوەیا دەم ئاڤان / ڕەورەوەی دماوان) — Lapwing / Plover (Vanellus vanellus)

**Rewrêwei Dimawan – The Dancing Bird of the Spring Fields**

The **Rewrêwei Dimawan**, known lovingly in Kurdish villages as *"the dancing bird of the spring fields,"* is one of the most graceful and shimmering water birds of Southern and Western Kurdistan. It moves across the wetlands of Hawraman, the plains of Duhok and Kirkuk, the meadows of Rojava, and the shining waters of Lake Urmia. Its presence is also felt in the Silemani marshes, the Wan basin, the Khabur valley, and every green field that breathes again when spring returns.

Medium in size but rich in beauty, this bird glows with shifting colours — metallic greens, purples, bronzes — while its snow-white belly shines beneath. A long, delicate crest rises from its head like the crown of a gentle dancer, and its slow, fluttering wings turn the early spring sky into a moving painting. With each soft beat, it seems to glide rather than fly, as if carried by the breath of the land itself. Lapwings live around 10–15 years, returning again and again to the wetlands and pastures they have loved since ancient times.

Its call — *"pee-wit, pee-wit!"* — moves across the plains like a soft echo of water and wind. But it is the bird's behaviour that has made it so beloved: the gentle, rhythmic flight; the hovering above wet meadows; the bold defence of its young; and the breathtaking sky-dance it performs in spring. In those moments, twisting and turning with wide, rounded wings, the Rewrêwei Dimawan dances for rain, for life, and for the renewal of the earth.

When spring arrives, it returns to the green plains of Kurdistan to nest. The female lays her beautifully speckled eggs in a shallow cradle of grass, hidden among reeds and damp soil. Both parents guard their young fiercely, diving at predators with surprising courage. The chicks leave the nest within hours, following their parents through soft fields, learning where to hide, where to feed, and how to survive in the whispering grass.

Some Rewrêwei Dimawan stay in Kurdistan through the year in mild regions; others take short journeys to warmer plains when winter comes. Their flight is unmistakable — slow wingbeats, wide wings, graceful floating paths, and sudden turns that look like a dance in the air. They feed quietly on insects, worms, and small creatures in wet ground, walking gently as though careful not to disturb the earth.

Lapwings have always lived close to Kurdish farmlands and wetlands — circling wheat fields, wandering through spring floods, appearing at river meadows and marsh edges. To Kurdish villagers, the Rewrêwei Dimawan symbolises **gentleness, patience, family devotion, and loyalty to the land**. Farmers say that this bird "would give its life for its children," a truth seen in its bold protection of its nest. Its spring dances have long been considered blessings — signs that rain, renewal, and hope are returning to the land.

But like many birds of the plains, it faces growing danger. Wetlands vanish, farmlands are ploughed deep with modern machines, marshes are drained, and pesticides steal away the insects it depends on. Hunting and the noise of war disturb old breeding grounds. And yet, despite these wounds, the Rewrêwei Dimawan still returns each spring, its wings shimmering over the fields, bringing peace, softness, and beauty to the Kurdish morning light.

With wings like painted light,
it dances above the fields —
a spirit of rain and rebirth,
whispering spring into the earth.

## 🎵 1.54- Bulbûl / Bilbil (بلبل / بولبول) — Common Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*)

**Bulbûl — The Nightingale of Kurdistan**

The **Bulbûl**, known simply as the nightingale across Kurdistan, is the tender voice of orchards, gardens, and river valleys. Though its feathers are plain brown and its body small, it carries a voice so powerful and emotional that whole generations of Kurdish poets, shepherds, and lovers have tied their hearts to its song.
It lives wherever trees meet water — in the orchards of **Hawraman and Silemani**, the gardens of **Amedi, Duhok, Zaxo, and Kirkuk**, the quiet riverbanks of **Ranya, Koya, and Botan**, and the fertile plains of **Rojava** from **Qamişlo to Afrin**. It also fills the forests and valleys of **Mahabad, Urmia, Sine, Kermashan, Wan (Van), Hakkarî, Amed**, and the river landscapes of the **Sirwan, Greater Zab, and Little Zab**.
Small and modest — just **15–16 cm long**, weighing little more than **20 grams** — the Bulbûl appears simple, yet its presence turns an ordinary garden into a place of magic and memory.

Its song is its crown.
A rising, trembling river of sound — *“tiu-tiu-chu-wee-lii-choo-choo!”* — carrying longing, sweetness, and the quiet ache of spring nights.
It sings late into the darkness, before dawn, and at sunset, hidden deep in bushes so that its voice seems to come from the night itself. In Hawraman and Botan, villagers say:
**“Bulbûl tarîkîyê diket muzîk.”**
*The nightingale weaves darkness into music*.

The Bulbûl is shy and gentle, hopping low among leaves and avoiding open places. It builds tiny nests in low bushes — cups of grass and roots — and lays **4–5 greenish-brown eggs**. Both parents work tirelessly to feed the chicks, who grow fast in the warm

orchards of **Silemani, Amedi, Duhok, Urmia**, and the river plains of **Rojava**. Most nightingales live **6–9 years**, returning faithfully every spring to the same beloved trees.

It is a long-distance traveller, arriving in **March–April** as Kurdistan begins to bloom, and leaving for Africa by **late September**.
The first Bulbûl call in **Amed, Sine, and Kermashan** is considered a sign that winter has released its grip — a whisper announcing that spring has truly begun.

But above all, the Bulbûl belongs to the Kurdish heart.
No other bird appears more deeply in Kurdish poetry, music, and love stories. It symbolizes **passion, longing, devotion, and the eternal conversation between love and sorrow**.
The legendary pair **"Gul û Bulbûl" — the rose and the nightingale** — represents beauty and the yearning heart, a theme woven through centuries of Kurdish tales.
Villagers say:
**"Gava Bulbûl dibêje, herî taş jî bîra evîn dike."**
*When the nightingale sings, even the stones remember love.*

Yet the Bulbûl faces dangers: orchards are disappearing, rivers shrinking, pesticides poisoning its insects, and cities expanding into the places where it once sang freely. In Silemani, Duhok, and parts of Rojava, the gardens grow smaller each year.

Still, wherever even a single rose blooms, wherever a fig tree shades a garden wall, the Bulbûl returns.
Its voice is a thread of memory — ancient, tender, eternal — tying the people of Kurdistan to their land, their past, and their longing.

You sing not to be heard,
but because your heart is full —
O Bulbûl of the roses,
your voice is the garden's soul.

## 🐓 1.55- Singesor / Sîngesûr (سینگەسوور / سێنگەسۆر) — Stonechat / Robin (Saxicola rubicola)

**Singesor – The Little Fire of the Hills**

The **Singesor**, known across Kurdistan for its fiery chest and lively spirit, is a small but radiant bird that brightens rocky hills, olive groves, village gardens, and stone walls from Hewlêr and Sulaymaniyah to Amed, Rojava, Wan, and Urmia. Its presence is woven into the quiet orchards of Duhok, the Kermashan foothills, the Kirkuk olive plains, and the vineyards that stretch across the Kurdish countryside.

Though tiny — barely 12–13 cm long and light as a handful of feathers — the Singesor burns with colour. The male carries a deep orange-red breast, a bold black head, a clean white forehead, a warm grey body, and a tail that glows like burning coal. The female is softer, wrapped in gentle browns and buff tones that melt perfectly into shrubs and dry fields. In every season it brings life to orchards, rocky slopes, vineyards, and forest edges, living around 5–7 years in the places where stone and garden meet.

Its voice is soft but spirited — *“tick-tack-tsee-churrr!”* — a song of curiosity and warmth that rises with the first light of morning. Singesor is confident and expressive, flicking its tail like a dancer tapping the earth. It watches from stones, fence posts, and low branches, greeting shepherds, farmers, and children with a fearless brightness. It is one of the earliest birds to sing in Kurdish dawns, warming the cold air with its tiny flame.

When spring arrives and the hills turn green, the Singesor looks for quiet places to nest — in thorny shrubs, stone walls, grass pockets, or low tree holes. The female lays her pale blue eggs in a soft cradle of moss, feathers, and fine grasses. Both parents feed the chicks, guarding them with a bravery far greater than their size. Soon the young hop among rocks and bushes, learning the art of tail-flicking and darting between shadows.

In many parts of Kurdistan — especially Rojava, Hewlêr, Kirkuk, and the warm valleys of Kermashan — Singesor stays all year. In colder areas like Amed, Wan, and highland

Silemani, it moves slightly south when winter comes. Its flight is light and fluttering, full of sudden stops, short bursts, and small perches. Feeding on insects, worms, spiders, and berries, it quietly supports the work of farmers and keeps orchards healthy.

To Kurdish households, the Singesor is more than a bird — it is a small flame of hope. It lives close to humans, singing over orchards, stone houses, olive groves, farm fences, and village gardens. Farmers say: **“If Singesor sings near the house, good weather is coming.”** With its bright chest and gentle voice, it has long been a symbol of warmth, endurance, spring’s arrival, and courage in lonely valleys. Its presence is found in Kurdish songs, children’s stories, and the poetry of the countryside.

Yet, like many small guardians of Kurdish nature, it faces challenges — disappearing stone walls, the cutting of old trees, pesticide use that kills insects, and the scars of war on orchards and gardens. But even with these wounds, the Singesor keeps singing. Its small body carries a large fire — a spirit of resilience, renewal, and the warmth of the Kurdish land.

On a cold stone it sings,
chest glowing like the sun —
a spark of courage
in the quiet heart of winter.

## 🐓 1.56- Bêzerok / Bêzrok / Bêzeroq (بێزەرۆق / بێزرۆك / بێزەرۆك) — Shrike / Butcherbird (Lanius collurio)

**Bêzerok – The Thorn-Hunter of Kurdistan**

The **Bêzerok**, known across Kurdistan as the “Butcherbird,” is a small but fierce spirit of the open fields, orchards, and thorny plains stretching across Rojhilat, Bahdinan, Amed, and Rojava. It watches the world from the branches of Duhok orchards, the plains of Hewlêr, the scrublands of Kermashan, and the windswept basin of Wan — a tiny hunter with the courage of a hawk.

Only 17–19 cm long and weighing barely 30 grams, it carries itself like a warrior. The male shows a soft grey head, a striking black mask across the eyes, a chestnut-red back, and pale underparts glowing in the sun. The female, wrapped in browns and fine markings, blends perfectly into shrubs and dry fields. Despite its size, the Bêzerok rules the thorn bushes, barbed fences, and open skies with a boldness that defines its name. It lives 6–10 years, thriving wherever thorny shrubs, scattered trees, and grazing lands create a mosaic of hiding and hunting places.

Full of energy and intelligence, the Bêzerok spends its days perched on thorn bushes, orchard branches, barbed-wire fences, and worn wooden posts — scanning the fields with eyes that miss nothing. Its call is sharp and restless — *“chack-chack-tsee-tsee!”* — often mixed with clever mimicry of other birds. But what truly makes it famous among Kurdish villagers is its uncanny habit of **impaling its prey** on thorns or wire, storing food like a tiny shepherd of shadows. Insects, beetles, small reptiles, even young mice — all are taken with swift confidence, held for later on the thorn-spikes that give this bird its legendary name.

When spring arrives and the land turns green, the Bêzerok begins its family season. The female hides her nest deep within thorny bushes, building a thick, rounded cup of roots, wool, grasses, and feathers. Inside, she lays 4–6 pale, brown-speckled eggs. Both parents guard their home with fearless bravery, diving at larger birds and animals many

times their size. In the wild fields of Kurdistan, few creatures protect their young so boldly.

The Bêzerok is a true traveller of the seasons. It returns to Kurdistan with the spring winds and leaves again in autumn, crossing deserts and valleys to winter in warmer African lands. Its flight is swift and purposeful — low to the ground, sharp and sudden in its dives, perfectly shaped for hunting. This small falcon-minded bird keeps natural balance across Kurdish fields by feeding on insects, caterpillars, grasshoppers, reptiles, and small rodents.

Close to Kurdish homes, it is a familiar companion of shepherd lands, vineyards, fields, and orchards. Many villagers admire its spirit, saying: **“Bêzerok has the heart of a hawk.”** To Kurds, it symbolises cleverness, alertness, protection, and the warrior soul hidden inside a tiny body. Watching a Bêzerok perched on a thorn bush at sunset feels like seeing a small guardian standing watch over the land.

But like many of Kurdistan’s small protectors, the Bêzerok faces danger. Shrubs and thorn hedges are being removed, orchards cut down, fields flattened, and pesticides spread across farmlands. Modern machinery and war’s disturbances also damage the quiet edges where this brave hunter lives and breeds. Yet despite these wounds, its sharp voice still slices the summer air — a sign that courage, even in the smallest forms, endures.

Tiny hunter of the thorns,
your courage outshines the eagles —
where others flee, you sing
with a blade of wind for a heart.

## 🪶 1.57- Qelîçê Şîn / Bal Şîn (قەلیچی شین / بالّ شین) — Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

**Qelîçê Şîn – The Blue-Winged Jay of Kurdistan**

The **Qelîçê Şîn**, the "blue-winged jay," is one of the brightest moving jewels of Kurdistan's forests. Its colours flash like sky and sunset between the oak trunks of Hawraman and Amedi, drifting through the pine shadows of Rawanduz, and echoing through the great forest belts of Rojhilat and Bakur. It thrives in the Zagros oak mountains, in the woodlands of Duhok, Barwari, and Şirnex, across the high forests of Sine, and in the deep green valleys of Dersim.

Medium-sized and full of colour, it grows about thirty-three centimetres long, with wings that spread in soft, bouncing flight. Its plumage blends warm pinkish-brown with black and white patterns, but the true signature of Qelîçê Şîn is the small but brilliant patch of blue-and-black bars on its wings — a flash of sky carried through the trees. They live 10–15 years and move quietly in pairs or small family groups, slipping through the forest like shadows with pockets of colour.

Qelîçê Şîn is among the most intelligent birds of the Kurdish mountains.
It mimics the voices of other birds, the calls of predators, and sometimes even the sounds of humans. When danger approaches, it unleashes a sudden, sharp cry — *"shraaak-shraaak!"* — a warning that sends the whole forest into alert. Curious, clever, and social, it plays, communicates, caches food for winter, and even uses tools at times. It feeds on acorns, insects, berries, and small reptiles, and is known for burying thousands of acorns during autumn. Many of these are forgotten, and from those forgotten seeds new oak trees rise — making the jay one of the quiet architects of Kurdistan's forests.

When spring warms the valleys, Qelîçê Şîn begins to breed. Deep in the shelter of oak and pine, a pair builds a thick bowl-shaped nest of twigs, moss, and grass. They lay 4–6

pale, speckled eggs. Both parents protect and feed the chicks with fierce devotion. After three or four weeks the young jays learn to fly, but remain close to their parents until they master the art of foraging and forest life.

This jay does not migrate. It stays in the same region all year, shifting only to lower valleys when winter winds become severe. Its flight is light and bouncing, with slow wingbeats that slip into gentle glides. Usually quiet, it travels like a soft shadow, but when alarmed it dashes swiftly through the trees, flashing its blue wing panels like sparks of light.

Qelîçê Şîn lives close to Kurdish mountain life — often seen near orchards, walnut groves, oak belts, forest villages, and shepherd paths. For generations, shepherds listened carefully to its warnings, saying:
**“If Qelîçê Şîn cries sharply, a stranger or a storm is near.”**
In Kurdish culture, the jay symbolises cleverness, communication, memory, and protection — a watchful spirit of the forest.

But even this intelligent bird faces growing challenges: forest fires, deforestation, war-damaged woodlands, shrinking acorn harvests, and the loss of old nesting trees. Yet Qelîçê Şîn endures. Its bright wings still break the forest shade, and its sharp voice still rises among the oaks — a guardian of memory, a messenger of the trees, and the keeper of forgotten seeds.

A flash of blue between the oaks,
a voice that borrows from the wind —
messenger of the forest,
keeper of forgotten seeds.

## 💙 1.58- Şînperî / Şînperîk (شینپەریک / شینپەری) — Blue Tit / Small Songbird (Cyanistes caeruleus)

**Şînperî – The Little Blue Fairy**

The **Şînperî**, “the little blue fairy” of Kurdistan, is one of the tiniest yet brightest sparks of life in the region’s forests and gardens. It flutters through the oak woodlands of Soran, Hawraman, and Amedi, dances across the orchards of Rawanduz and Duhok, and colours the forest edges of Bakur and the wet highlands of Wan. Wherever branches tremble with morning light, the Şînperî is never far — a living bead of colour woven into the green fabric of the Zagros.

Barely the size of a leaf, it measures just over eleven centimetres, with a wingspan smaller than a child’s hand. Yet its beauty shines boldly:
a crown of bright blue,
a breast washed with warm yellow,
a clean white face crossed by a thin black stripe,
and touches of soft green along its tiny back.
Though it weighs almost nothing, Şînperî is full of courage, curiosity, and restless life.

Its voice is a cheerful morning melody — **“tsee-tsee-churr-churr!”** — a delicate but joyful sound that wakes orchards and gardens with the first light. It moves like a spark, hopping, hanging upside down, and darting between branches with playful confidence. Always exploring, always active, the little blue fairy feeds on insects, spiders, seeds, and berries, turning every corner of the forest into its playground.

Spring brings the beginning of its busy season.
In hollow trees, stone walls, and old woodpecker holes, it builds a soft nest of moss, wool, feathers, and grass. The clutch is surprisingly large — seven to ten tiny speckled eggs. Both parents work tirelessly, making hundreds of feeding trips each day as their chicks grow. Though Şînperî lives only two or three years, its short life burns brightly, filled with purpose and movement.

Unlike migratory birds, the Şînperî stays in Kurdistan through all seasons. In winter, it joins mixed flocks of small birds, gathering strength and safety in numbers while wandering through quiet orchards and frost-touched valleys. Its flight is quick and fluttering, full of twists and dips, like a piece of sky-colour carried by the wind.

Among Kurdish homes and villages, Şînperî is a familiar and cherished presence. It nests in tree hollows, wall cracks, and the timber beams of traditional mountain houses. In Kurdish culture, it symbolises innocence, light, joyful simplicity, and the renewal of spring. Children say that seeing a Şînperî at dawn brings good luck, and many families believe its presence blesses the home with warmth and happiness.

Yet even this small miracle faces challenges — the loss of old trees, shrinking orchards, pesticides, and harsh winters. Still, its adaptability keeps it alive. As long as oak forests breathe and gardens flourish, the little blue fairy continues to shine, brightening mornings with its colour and song.

Small as a leaf,
yet bold as the dawn —
its song opens the heart
like spring itself.

## 1.59- Geru Şînke (گەروو شینکە) — Bluethroat (Luscinia svecica)

**Geru Şînke — The Blue Singer of Kurdistan**

The **Geru Şînke**, known to the world as the Bluethroat, is one of the most enchanting and elusive small birds of Kurdistan — a tiny jewel that flickers between reeds, stones, and mountain water like a living piece of sky. It dwells in the cool valleys and wet meadows of **Halgurd, Rawanduz, Choman, Bradost, Soran**, and in the fresh springs and willow thickets of **Kirmaşan, Ilam, Hawraman, Penjwen**. From the river-fed lowlands of **Wan** and the **Aras Basin**, to the high ridges of **Mount Gara**, Amedi, Duhok uplands, Şırnak, and Hakkari, the Şînke follows the music of water. During migration, it flashes briefly across the scattered wetlands of **Rojava**, leaving a spark of blue behind.

Small enough to fit in a closed hand — only **13–15 cm** long and weighing around **18–20 grams** — the Geru Şînke carries extraordinary beauty. The male's throat glows with a brilliant patch of sapphire blue, encircled by white, red, and rusty colours that shimmer like dawn light on a mountain stream. The female is softer, her chest washed in warm earth tones with just a whisper of blue, like a secret waiting to break into song.

This bird is deeply tied to water. Wherever clear springs emerge from stone, or willows bend over wet soil, the Geru Şînke is there — hopping through grass, weaving between reeds, flicking its tail to reveal warm flashes of orange beneath. It moves quietly but is always busy, catching insects, larvae, spiders, and tiny river creatures. Villagers say you can tell the health of a stream by whether the Şînke stays beside it.

When spring breathes back into the mountains, the voice of the Geru Şînke returns with it. Before sunrise in **Rawanduz, Bradost, Choman**, and the lakes of **Wan**, its song rises like mist from the water — a flowing mixture of whistles, trills, soft warbles, and astonishing mimicry. In places where snow still touches the hilltops, its voice feels like the first sign of returning life. Many Kurds call it **Stranbêjê Çemê Şîn** — *the Blue Singer of the Streams* — for it sings with all the tenderness of running water.

In the warm months of April to July, the Şînke hides its nest in low grass, reeds, or willow roots, weaving fine grasses and feathers into a small cradle for **four to six eggs**. The parents raise their chicks in secrecy, slipping back and forth through the vegetation with tiny insects held in their beaks. Their young grow quickly — learning the soft alarm calls that help them survive among foxes, snakes, and sudden changes in the mountain weather.

To Kurdish villagers, the appearance of Geru Şînke holds special meaning. In Hawraman and Halgurd, people say:
**“When the Şînke sings loudly, the mountains begin to thaw.”**
It is a symbol of hope, renewal, and the return of spring rains. Its song is believed to bless the streams, nourish the fields, and soften the final grip of winter. Shepherds often pause near springs to listen, believing the bird carries messages from the snowmelt above.

But like many mountain birds, the Geru Şînke faces growing dangers: shrinking wetlands, dried streams caused by drought, overgrazing of meadows, and the slow warming of its highland breeding grounds. As water becomes scarce, the bird loses not only habitat but the heart of its existence.
Yet in places where the streams still run clear — in **Rawanduz, Gara, Wan, Halgurd, Choman** — the blue flame of the Şînke continues to flash through the reeds, a living jewel of Kurdistan, delicate but persistent.

*Blue flame of the mountain water,*
*it sings to melt the snow —*
*a voice too small to move the earth,*
*yet strong enough to wake the spring.*

## 🌄 1.60- Çwêleke Reweze (چوێلەکە ڕەوەزە) — Rock Thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*)

**Çwêleke Reweze — The Bird of the Rock**

The **Çwêleke Reweze**, the “bird of the rock,” brings sudden colour and quiet grace to the stone terraces and rugged hillsides of **Rojava**, **Bakur**, and the foothills of the **Zagros**. It is especially beloved in the rocky meadows of **Afrin**, **Botan**, and **Amedi**, where it arrives with the early breath of spring — a small, glowing flame perched against the ancient grey stones.

Measuring only **17–20 cm**, with wings stretching **30–35 cm**, this radiant bird appears humble at first, but the moment it lands on a warm rock, it becomes a living spark of beauty. The male glows with bright orange breast and belly, a soft blue-grey head and back, a dark mask across the face, and a flash of pure white on the rump when it flies. The female is gentler, wearing shades of warm earth and delicate patterns that blend naturally with Kurdish hillsides.

Çwêleke Reweze feeds on insects, spiders, berries, and small worms, hopping lightly across stones and low bushes. It often chooses the highest rocks as its throne, scanning the land with calm alertness, as if guarding the quiet valleys it returns to every year.

Its song is among the sweetest voices of the Kurdish highlands — a soft, flute-like melody, *“tlii-liu-choo-tsee…”*, both gentle and slightly melancholic, rising at dawn and again at sunset when the hills turn gold. It sings from prominent perches, flicking its tail with excitement or warning, and moving gracefully in short flights between rocks and terraces. Even in remote valleys, where silence rests heavily on the stones, the Çwêleke Reweze brings life, colour, and a sense of companionship.

When spring arrives, it returns faithfully to the same beloved stones of **Afrin**, **Amedi**, **Botan**, and the Zagros slopes. It builds its nest deep inside rock crevices, stacked stone

walls, or the old terraces carved by Kurdish hands generations ago. The female lays her pale blue eggs in April or May, and both parents feed the chicks with insects and berries until they grow strong enough to leave the stones behind. These birds live around **6–8 years**, often returning to the same nesting places every season, as if they too feel the pull of memory and homeland.

The Çwêleke Reweze is a migratory soul. It arrives in **March**, when the mountains begin to breathe again, and leaves in **September**, flying south as the evenings grow cold. Its flight is quick, light, and fluttering — never straying far from the slopes, terraces, and stones it loves. It is a wanderer only because the seasons demand it, but its heart belongs to the Kurdish hills.

For Kurdish shepherds and villagers, the arrival of Çwêleke Reweze has always meant the true beginning of spring. Its bright colours break the greyness of winter, its songs open the silence of remote valleys, and its loyalty to old nesting sites mirrors the Kurdish connection to ancestral land. In poetry, it is remembered as *"the singer of stone hills"* — a small, glowing messenger of renewal and resilience.

But like many of Kurdistan's gentle creatures, it faces threats: the disappearing terraces, collapsing old stone villages, loss of insects from chemicals, disturbance from machinery, and the scars of war across many Kurdish regions. Yet wherever the stones remain standing and spring returns, the Çwêleke Reweze comes home. A soft voice on the rocks. A flame among the ruins. A reminder that beauty always finds its way back to the land that shaped it.

*Flame among stones,*
*voice of morning light —*
*you turn the silence into song.*

## 1.61- Çwelekêya Payizê / Çweleke Payize (چوێلەکەیا پایزێ / چوێلەکە پایزە) — Robin (Erithacus rubecula)

**Çwelekêya Payizê — The Autumn Robin of Kurdistan**

The **Çwelekêya Payizê**, the Robin of Kurdistan, is one of the most tender companions of the autumn hills — a gentle red-breasted spirit whose soft presence warms the fading year. It appears everywhere that quiet beauty still lives: in the gardens of **Duhok, Zakho, Amedi, and Akre**, the forests of **Hawraman, Shaho, Meriwan**, and the plains around **Penjwin, Kirmashan, and Ilam**. It flutters through the cool mornings of **Erzîrom, Mêrdîn, Agirî, Dersim**, and follows shepherds and children along the riverbanks of **Kobani, Hasakah, Qamishlo**, and the gardens of **Afrin**. In the high air of **Rawanduz, Choman, Soran, and the Bradost mountains**, its quiet presence brings a small flame of colour into winter's shadow.

Small in size but striking in spirit, the robin measures only **12–14 cm**, with warm olive-brown feathers and a glowing orange-red breast that seems to carry the last ember of summer. Its large, dark eyes give it a curious, friendly expression — as if it knows the people whose steps it follows. Male and female look alike, moving gently between branches, stones, and fallen leaves.

Wherever the earth softens under oak trees, where orchards gather mist, or where old stone walls hold the warmth of the day, the Çwelekêya Payizê appears. It is solitary, but never distant. Gardeners throughout Kurdistan know this bird well: the little companion that hops close behind them in autumn, waiting for insects stirred by their footsteps. For this reason, Kurds lovingly call it **Hevalê Payiz — "the Companion of Autumn."** With its upright posture and quick, thoughtful movements, it looks as if it listens to the earth itself.

The robin is one of the few birds that continues singing through autumn and winter. Its melody is soft, clear, and slightly melancholic — like water flowing over stones in a

quiet ravine. At dusk, its thin call — **“tick… tick…”** — drifts through fallen leaves, a sound that brings calm to the shortening days. In the silent mornings of winter, this song feels like a memory of sunlight and a promise that warmth will return.

When spring arrives, the robin begins its nesting season. It builds a hidden cup of moss among tree roots, inside stone walls, or tucked into wood piles and old barns. The female lays **four to six speckled eggs**, and both parents work tirelessly to feed their chicks. Even after the young fledge, they follow their parents for days, chirping softly for reassurance. Many robins raise two broods before the summer heat begins.

For the Kurdish people, the Çwelekêya Payizê carries deep meaning. In old tales, its red chest is said to have been marked by the fire of compassion — a gift it earned for helping a poor family survive a harsh winter. Kurds call it **Dilê Payiz — “the Heart of Autumn,”** believing that if a robin sings near the home during the cold season, peace is close. And when it appears on a snowy morning, villagers say the weather will soon soften.

Throughout all parts of Kurdistan, the robin remains one of the most familiar and comforting birds, thriving in gardens, orchards, forest edges, and even in quiet corners of towns. As the mountains grow colder, it descends gently into villages, becoming one of the last voices in the silent winter landscape — a reminder that even the smallest beings can carry great warmth.

*Red flame in the breath of cold,*
*it sings of warmth and home —*
*when all else sleeps,*
*its voice keeps the hearth alive.*

## 🌸 1.62- Qewî / Peresêlke / Piresêlke / Parasêlke

## (/ پەراسێلکە/ پیرەسێلکە پەڕەسێلکە/ قەوی ) — Barn Swallow (Hirundo rustica)

**Qewî — The Bird of Spring, The Messenger of Hope**

The Qewî, the beloved swallow of Kurdistan, is the bird that carries spring on its wings. Long before the flowers open or the fields turn green, Qewî appears in the sky — a small, shining spirit returning from distant lands, announcing that winter has finally loosened its grip. From Amedi and Silemani to Rojava, Kirkuk, Kermashan, Urmia, and the sun-warmed villages of Hewraman, its arrival brings joy to every doorstep. For Kurdish families, spring does not truly begin until the first Qewî circles above a home.

Slender and graceful, it glitters with blue-black wings, a red throat, creamy underparts, and a long elegant forked tail that flashes in the sun. Though it weighs barely the size of a handful of walnuts, it flies with the mastery of a dancer — weaving effortlessly above orchards, rivers, rooftops, stables, and wheat fields across the whole Kurdish homeland. Qewî spends almost its entire life in the air, drinking the wind, catching tiny insects, and following the movements of rivers like Khabur, Sirwan, Aras, and the Little Zab.

Its voice is a cheerful, living music — soft, chattering notes of **tswi-tswi-chirr-tsi** that echo through village courtyards at dawn. Children lift their heads to hear it. Elders smile quietly. Shepherds know that when the swallow returns, the mountains will soon be alive again.

Qewî does not simply pass through Kurdistan — it chooses the Kurdish home as its own. Every year it returns to the same house beam, the same stable roof, the same porch corner of mudbrick villages from Duhok to Qamişlo. With small beakfuls of clay, straw, and earth, it builds a mud nest under roofs and bridges, repairing it year after year like a faithful friend who keeps their promise. For Kurdish families, its presence is a blessing. Many say harming a swallow is a sin, for Qewî carries prayers, hope, peace, and protection.

Kurdish folklore remembers the Qewî as a gentle guardian — a bird that brings good fortune to the home it chooses. Some say that when a swallow flies into your courtyard, it carries the light of spring inside. Others believe it watches over travellers and shepherds, guiding them safely across long mountain paths. Its loyalty has earned it a sacred place in Kurdish memory.

When autumn approaches and the days shorten, Qewî gathers with its brothers and sisters on village wires, lining up like beads on a string. Then, with a sudden wave of wings, they rise and follow the great rivers southward — across deserts, mountains, and continents. Their journey stretches thousands of kilometres, yet every single year they return to the same Kurdish roof, the same window corner, the same human family.

But the world of Qewî is changing. Pesticides poison the insects it depends on. Rivers disappear under drought and pollution. Old roofs are rebuilt with smooth concrete where mud nests cannot hold. War damages quiet stables and village homes where swallows once nested safely. And still, despite all this, Qewî keeps returning — carrying spring in its heart and hope in its wings.

The swallow is more than a bird in Kurdistan.
It is a promise.
A blessing.
A sign that life will always return,
no matter how dark the winter has been.

Wherever its shadow passes —
over Amed plains, Rojava villages, Silemani orchards, the rivers of Urmia,
the spirit of spring follows behind it.

When swallows return to the roofs of spring,
joy wakes from its long sleep —
the sky opens its eyes again,
and the wind begins to sing.

## 🏔️ 1.63- Çwelekêya Qandîlê / Çweleke Qendîle (باڵندە قەندیلە) — Mountain Swift (local) (*Apus melba / Apus apus*)

**Çweleke Qendîle – The Bird of Qandil**

The **Çweleke Qendîle**, "the bird of Qandil," is one of the purest symbols of freedom in the Kurdish sky. It belongs to the high air of the Zagros, sweeping effortlessly over the jagged peaks of Qandil, drifting above the deep valleys of Hawraman, and circling like a dark crescent above Amedi, Rawanduz, Soran, and the tall ridges of Bakur and Rojhilat. It is a creature shaped by the mountains, sharpened by wind, and carried by sunlight.

Slender and built for eternal flight, it measures no more than twenty centimetres, its wings long and crescent-shaped, its tail slightly forked, its plumage dark as mountain soil and soot, with a shining white patch at the throat — like a spark of light on a blade of wind. Weighing almost nothing, yet made of strength, the Çweleke Qendîle spends nearly its entire life in the open sky.

It lives ten to fifteen years, returning every spring to the same ancestral cliffs, as if tied to the mountains by an invisible thread.

Its voice is a sharp, whistling cry — **"sriii–sriii!"** — ringing through Qandil's high valleys during summer evenings.
To shepherds and mountaineers, this sound is as familiar as the wind itself.

Çweleke Qendîle is a master of air, carrying out every part of its life on the wing.
It feeds in flight, catching insects like sparks in sunlight.
It drinks droplets of rain from the air.
It mates while gliding.
It sleeps while circling at dizzying heights.
It remains aloft for months, sometimes hundreds of days without touching the earth.

When it finally lands, it is only to raise its young. High in the safety of stone, it nests in deep mountain cracks and cliff eaves, forming bustling colonies far above human

reach. The parents bring food to the chicks with astonishing speed, teaching them to leap into the wind and not look back.

With wings sharp as scythes, it flies like a whisper of lightning.
Some reach speeds near 200 kilometres per hour, climbing on warm mountain winds before shooting across valleys.
Every autumn they leave for Africa, yet no matter how far they travel, they return to Qandil between April and September — faithful as migrating light.

To the Kurdish people, this bird is more than an animal.
It is a symbol of freedom, endurance, and the untamed spirit of the mountains.
It crosses borders without fear, carries no burden but the wind, and belongs only to the wide sky.
Villagers say:

**“When Çweleke Qendîle circles the peaks at sunset, it sings the mountains to sleep.”**

Its endless flight reflects the Kurdish heart — always rising, always wandering, always refusing to bow.

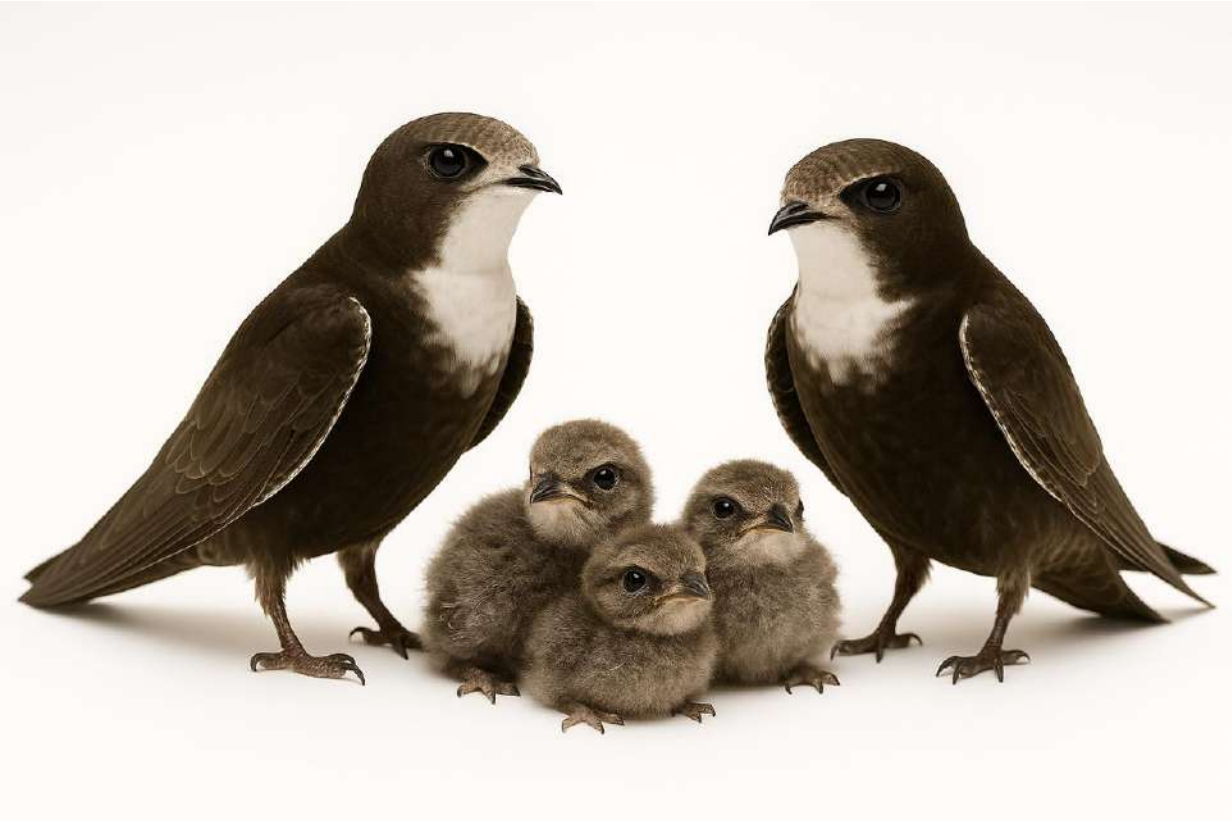
Yet even this sky-born spirit faces its own challenges:
the blasting of cliffs destroying nesting sites,
the decline of insects,
polluted air,
climate-shifting winds,
and bright city lights confusing its night journeys.

Still it endures —
a tireless wanderer whose wings stitch the sky to the mountains of Kurdistan.

Born from the wind,
never touching the earth —

your home is the horizon,

your heart the mountain’s breath.



## 1.64- Balxencere/ Basît (باسیت /بالّخەنجەرە) — Alpine Swift (*Tachymarptis melba*)

**Balxencere — The High-Flyer of Kurdistan**

The **Balxencere**, the “bird of the heights,” is one of the most extraordinary creatures of Kurdistan’s sky — a master of air and wind whose entire life unfolds above the mountains. It circles endlessly over **Mount Ararat, Qandil, Şaho**, and the sweeping ridges of the **Zagros**, gliding where cold air rises to meet the warm breath of the sun. Among the mountain birds, none is as free, as tireless, or as devoted to the open sky.

Elegant and weightless, it measures **20–23 cm** in length with wings stretching **55–60 cm**, yet weighs barely **100 grams**. Its plumage is dark chocolate above and pale white below, with a bright white throat patch that flashes like a star each time it turns. Its long, scythe-shaped wings are carved for speed and endurance, allowing it to cut through the air with effortless grace. Balxencere is so deeply adapted to flight that it feeds, drinks, and even sleeps while gliding — rarely touching the ground except to nest on sheer cliffs or ancient stone towers built by forgotten hands.

Its voice is a sharp, echoing cry — *“sriiii-reee-sriii!”* — carried far across high valleys and stony ravines. Each note rises and falls like a silver thread in the wind. From sunrise until the last soft blue of evening, the Kewê Basît remains in motion, weaving through ridges and gorges, catching insects mid-air with its open mouth, or skimming low across mountain lakes to drink in a single swift touch. At times it circles deep in thermal winds, rising higher and higher until it becomes only a speck against the sky.

In spring, when the warm winds return to Kurdistan, so does the swift. It chooses only the highest and most unreachable places for nesting: vertical cliffs above Ararat, hollow stone towers on mountain edges, cracks in the walls of old Kurdish ruins. The nest is simple — a small cup glued with saliva to the rock — but the bond to place is ancient. Each year the swifts return to the same cliffs of **Qandil**, **Şaho**, and the **Zagros**, just as

their ancestors did centuries ago. The female lays a small clutch of white eggs, and both parents share the duty of warming them. The chicks grow quickly, preparing for the long aerial life that awaits them.

Balxencere is one of the world's greatest long-distance travellers. It migrates between Kurdistan and Africa, crossing mountains, deserts, and seas without stopping. Some remain airborne for months, rising higher than many raptors and gliding at altitudes where even eagles seldom venture. Kurdish shepherds have long admired this bird, watching its circles from the high plateaus and hearing its whistles echo across the rocks. Travellers once believed it lived between the worlds — too little on earth to belong to soil, too much in the sky to be tied to a single place. They imagined it carrying whispered prayers, hopes, and wandering thoughts of those journeying through the mountains.

But even the greatest sky-dancer faces threats.
The destruction of mountain cliffs through quarrying, the collapse of ancient stone towers, the decline of flying insects from pesticides, and the unpredictable winds shaped by climate change all place pressure on its fragile nesting colonies. Kewê Basît relies on clean air, open sky, and healthy insect-filled winds — gifts that must be protected if its circles are to continue.

Yet every year, when the warm air rises above **Qandil** and **Ararat**, the swift returns.
A living thread between mountains and the infinite sky.
A reminder that freedom can be light as a feather and strong as a horizon.

*Beyond the reach of arrows or sorrow,*
*it circles the sun's gate —*
*a whisper of wings,*
*eternal over Kurdistan's peaks.*

## 🕊️ 1.65- Swêru / Qilqilok /Qelqok (سوێرو/ قیلقلۆک / قەلقلۆک) — The European Starling *( Sturnus vulgaris)*

**Swêru — The Shimmering Starling of Kurdistan**

The Swêru, the lively and shimmering Starling of Kurdistan, is one of the most energetic and musical birds of our valleys, orchards, mountains, and open plains. It flashes across the skies of Soran, Rawanduz, Shaqlawa, and Ranya; dances between the olive trees of Afrin and Amûdê; gathers in large flocks over the wheat fields of Garmiyan and Kalar; and chatters happily in the gardens of Silemanî, Halabja, Duhok, Amedi, Mahabad, Merîwan, and Bokan. From the Zagros foothills to the Tigris plains and the orchards of Rojava, the Qilqilok is a familiar companion of every season.

Small but full of brilliance, the European Starling measures around 20–23 cm, with a sleek, sharp body designed for quick flight and graceful movement. In sunlight, its feathers glow with purple, blue, and green metallic reflections — like tiny jewels scattered across the sky. In winter, its dark plumage is dotted with pale speckles, giving it a starry appearance that has inspired stories, songs, and childhood memories.

The Swêru is known for its incredible voice. It whistles, clicks, chirps, imitates, and sings more than 15 different sounds, weaving them into a single musical stream. Its song fills the early mornings of Kurdish villages, blending with the rustling of poplar trees, the bleating of goats, and the soft murmur of spring water. Children often stop to listen to its rapid “qil-qil-qil” call — the sound that gave this bird its name in Kurdish.

Lively and intelligent, this bird is rarely alone. It moves in tight, coordinated flocks, sweeping across the sky like black waves, turning and twisting with perfect synchronization. At sunset, thousands gather on power lines, rooftops, tall trees, and minarets, filling the air with playful noise and shimmering movement. Watching a murmuration of Swêru is one of the hidden wonders of Kurdish nature — a dance of the sky.

The Swêru lives close to people. It nests in cracks of old houses, in holes in orchard walls, under the roofs of barns, inside tree hollows, and even in the beams of village mosques. It feeds on insects, grains, fruits, seeds, and small worms, helping farmers by clearing pests from vineyards and wheat fields. In spring, when fresh grasses grow and insects awaken, the Swêru becomes especially active, darting across farmlands like a tiny guardian of the harvest.

During breeding season, it builds a soft nest of grass, feathers, and leaves. The female lays 4–6 pale blue eggs — delicate and beautiful, like pieces of a spring sky placed gently inside the nest. Both parents take turns feeding the chicks, bringing insects again and again until the young birds grow strong enough to join the flock. By early summer, the orchards of Kurdistan echo with the cheerful cries of newly fledged Swêru learning to fly.

This bird is adaptable and resilient. Whether in mountains, plains, orchards, villages, or city parks, it thrives wherever there is food, shelter, and the comforting presence of trees. Its intelligence, memory, and strong social bonds make it one of the most successful birds in Kurdistan.

But the Swêru also faces challenges — shrinking farmlands, pesticides, loss of nesting places, and competition with other birds. Yet it remains a determined survivor, spreading its wings across every corner of Kurdish land, singing its bright and restless songs.

On the wire above the village path,
a small body shines like night rain —
a restless song, a silver call,
the heart of spring in a single voice.

## 🖤 1.66- Çwêleke Reşeke (چوێلەکە ڕەشکە) — Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

**Çwêleke Reşeke — The Blackbird of Kurdistan**

The **Çwêleke Reşeke**, the “dark bird” of Kurdistan, is one of the most familiar and beloved voices in the gardens and villages of the Kurdish homeland. From the orchards of **Soran, Amedi, Afrin**, and **Sanandaj** to the oak forests and foothills of **Rawanduz, Hawraman, Botan**, and **Serhed**, this gentle bird weaves itself quietly into daily Kurdish life.
It thrives wherever there are trees, stone walls, water, and a little peace.

The male is glossy jet-black, shining like midnight water, with a bright yellow-orange beak and a golden ring around its eye — a tiny flame glowing against the dark. The female is softer, dressed in warm brown feathers with a lightly speckled chest, a quieter beauty perfectly blended with Kurdish gardens. Measuring **24–27 cm** and weighing around **80–120 grams**, the blackbird spends much of its time hopping along the ground beneath vines, rose bushes, and fig trees, turning leaves gently as it searches for insects, berries, and fallen fruit. It moves with calm confidence, a familiar neighbour in every season.

Before most people wake, the Çwêleke Reşeke opens the day.
Its rich, flute-like melody — **“tliuu-tliu-chu-chuu-liuu…”** — rises delicately through dawn mist, drifting across rooftops, orchards, and quiet valleys. Many Kurds grew up with this sound as the true alarm clock of their childhood homes. It sings from the tops of walnut trees, from mud-brick walls, from the edges of fields still glistening with dew. Its voice is a gentle promise: a new day is beginning, and the land is alive.

Blackbirds are loyal to their territories and to the families who share their gardens. They nest carefully among vines, rose bushes, stone openings, or low tree branches, building tidy bowls of grass, mud, and leaves. The female lays **three to five blue-green eggs**, speckled like the hills of spring. Parents work tirelessly together, bringing insects to

their chicks until the young, after about two weeks, take their first trembling flights between apricot trees and garden walls. In the cool afternoons, they often follow gardeners or farmers, curious and trusting, knowing these humans are part of their world.

The Çwêleke Reşeke rarely leaves Kurdistan.
It stays through winter in **Soran, Amedi, Afrin, Van**, and across **Rojhilat**, descending only into lower valleys when snow becomes too heavy. Its flight is soft and low, weaving easily between orchards, walls, and riverbanks.
It is a bird that belongs deeply to its place — and to its people.

For centuries, Kurds have loved this humble bird. Elders say the blackbird sings after rain to bless the soil, and farmers once believed its dawn song protected the harvest. In Kurdish poetry, its dark feathers and bright beak symbolise **hope emerging from sadness**, a reminder that even in difficult times, beauty and strength can rise again. Shepherds, gardeners, and early risers often pause at the first note of its song — a quiet companion in moments of solitude.

But like many creatures of the Kurdish countryside, the Çwêleke Reşeke faces growing threats. The loss of orchards to expanding cities, pesticides that empty gardens of insects, destruction of ground-level nests, and the chaos of war all reduce its safe places. Yet it remains one of Kurdistan's strongest survivors — a small, dark form carrying a bright, steady voice through changing times.

*Black as the night,*
*but voice of the dawn —*
*you teach the heart to sing*
*even when it's alone.*

## 1.67- Qewê Reşkî (قەوێ ڕەشکی) — *Black Redstart (Phoenicurus ochruros)*

**Qewê Reşkî — The Little Flame of the Stone Villages**

The **Qewê Reşkî**, the Black Redstart, is one of the most charming small birds of Kurdistan — a lively spark of movement that brings colour and music to stone walls, old rooftops, and ancient landscapes. Wherever old stone stands, from the mountain villages of **Amedi, Akre, Zakho, Duhok** to the historic strongholds of **Erzîrom, Agirî (Ararat), Erzincan, and Dersim**, this little bird flickers in and out of view like a tiny flame. It dances among the houses and courtyards of **Hawraman, Shaho, Meriwan, Kirmashan**, and across the rooftops and ruins of **Afrin, Kobani, Hasakah, Qamishlo**, reaching further into the rugged terrain of **Rawanduz, Soran, Bradost, Penjwen**, and the countless stony villages of Kurdistan.

Small though it is — **13–15 cm** in length and weighing only **14–18 grams** — Qewê Reşkî is a striking sight. The male is dressed in charcoal-black and soft grey, but his tail burns with a bright fire-orange glow, flicking constantly like an ember caught in the wind. The female is dressed in gentle brown-grey, but she shares the same warm, glowing tail. This constant tail-flick has given the bird its beloved Kurdish nickname: **"Kewê Giranî" — the little flame.**

Qewê Reşkî thrives in places where stone and story meet: in the high alleys of Hawraman, the narrow paths of Amedi, the tops of ruined citadels in Erzincan, the outer walls of old Mêrdîn, and the scattered stones of Bradost's cliffs. It chooses the company of people, not out of fearlessness but because the old Kurdish villages offer cracks, crevices, beams, and stones that provide perfect shelter. Its soft metallic call — **"tsip-tsip… tsik!"** followed by a crackling sound — echoes like sparks popping from burning firewood. As it sings, it flicks its wings and tail in a rhythm that seems to express both alertness and joy.

The bird feeds with admirable cleverness, snatching insects from between stones, darting after small flies midair, and exploring the edges of old walls and rooftops. Beetles, spiders, flies, and winter berries sustain this little flame through every season.

When spring reaches the mountains, Qewê Reşkî begins its nesting. It hides its nest deep in the protective arms of stone walls, under eaves, inside old beams, or in abandoned ruins. The female lays **four to six pale eggs**, and both parents work tirelessly, flying back and forth with insects to feed their hidden young. Pairs often raise more than one brood before summer ends, filling the village with fluttering young flames learning to use their wings.

For Kurdish villagers, the Qewê Reşkî holds a place of affection and symbolism. Some call it **“Mergî Agirî” — the fire-tail bird**, believing its glowing tail carries warmth from the hearth. Many say that if it nests near a home, prosperity and renewal will follow. Its return each spring is taken as a sign that the highlands are awakening again. When it stands upon ruins, people say the old stones still breathe and remember. Children imitate its tail-flicking dance, calling it the little bird that “**warms the stones**.”

Unlike many birds, Qewê Reşkî adapts easily to human places — rooftops, gardens, industrial edges, and ancient sites — making it one of the few mountain birds whose presence has remained stable. From **Amedi** to **Hawraman**, from the foothills of **Ararat** to the alleys of **Afrin, Koya, and Choman**, its crackling dawn call is still heard above the roofs, reminding everyone of endurance, warmth, and hope.

*A spark against a wall of stone,*
*it flickers, sings, and stays —*
*the smallest flame*
*that warms the mountain’s heart.*

## 🥜 1.68- Çweleke Mişke (چوێلەکە مشکە) — Eurasian Wren (Troglodytes troglodytes)

**Çweleke Mişke — The Mouse Bird of Kurdistan**

The **Çweleke Mişke**, the “mouse bird” of Kurdistan, is the smallest bird in the entire homeland — a tiny spark of life that moves with the speed and spirit of the mountains themselves. Its name comes from its quick, mouse-like movements, darting between stones, roots, and walls so swiftly that it seems to vanish into the breath of the earth. It lives across the cool, rugged highlands of **Hewraman, Amedi, Van**, and throughout the forested and rocky belts of **Şaho, Bradost, Duhok, Soran, Rawanduz, Qandil, Zagros, Botan, Dersim, Amed, Hakkarî, Sine, Mahabad, Urmia, Bingol, Garzan, and Çewlîg**.
Wherever the mountains stand old and silent, the Çweleke Mişke hides among their stones.

It is barely **9–10 cm** long and weighs **7–10 grams**, light enough to fit in the palm of a child’s hand. Its tail stands upright like a proud little flag, and its brown plumage — streaked and speckled — blends perfectly with bark, dry leaves, and ancient walls. Despite its size, it carries the courage of a giant, restless and determined, always moving, always alive.

Its song is astonishing — a fast, joyful, fearless trill that bursts across the quiet valleys: *“tirrr-tititit-chrrr-chrrrr!”*
Even in snow, even in the deep cold of Hewraman and Botan, its voice rings like a brave heartbeat.

The Çweleke Mişke rarely flies far. Instead, it hops, climbs, squeezes into cracks, creeps along stone walls like a mouse, and disappears into roots with magical ease. It hides expertly yet sings boldly, often from a low stone warmed by the morning sun. It

spends its days searching for insects and spiders, pausing only to catch its breath before rushing on again.

In spring, the male becomes an architect of the mountains. He builds several round, soft nests of moss and leaves tucked into stone crevices, tree roots, terraces, or the corners of old mud-brick houses. The female chooses the one she loves, and together they raise their family — **5–7 tiny white eggs** that hatch into hungry, lively chicks. Parents make hundreds of journeys each day to feed them, a devotion made even more heroic by their small size.
Though tiny, the Çweleke Mişke can live up to **five years**, a long life for such a delicate creature.

It is a bird that never abandons its home. Through winter storms it remains hidden in stone piles, roots, and broken walls, singing even when the mountains freeze. It may move slightly downhill when snow grows heavy, but it never leaves its homeland. Its endurance is one of the miracles of Kurdish wildlife.

In Kurdish villages from Amedi to Hawraman, people see the Çweleke Mişke as a symbol of **humility, persistence, and hidden strength**. Elders say:
*"Çweleke Mişke fears no winter, for its song warms the stones."*
Hearing its bright winter trill is believed to bring courage and the promise of spring — a reminder that hope can be small, quiet, and unbroken.

Though resilient, the Çweleke Mişke faces its own struggles: the loss of old stone walls and terraces, the removal of bushes and hedges, forest fires in Botan and Dersim, pesticides that kill insects, and the destruction of mountain villages through war. Yet it survives, adapting to every crack and shadow.
Wherever there are stones, roots, and the old bones of villages, the Çweleke Mişke persists — **small in body, mighty in heart**.

Tiny as a leaf,
yet your voice shakes the mountain —

you are the whisper of courage

in a cold world.

## 🦜 1.69- Tûtîy Zerîn (توتی زەرین) — Golden Parrot (*Symbolic / Psittacidae family*)

**Tûtîy Zerîn – The Golden Parrot**

The **Tûtîy Zerîn**, meaning *the Golden Parrot* in Kurdish, is not a native bird of the mountains or forests of Kurdistan. Its home lies far away in the green world of India, Africa, and Southeast Asia, yet its image travelled into Kurdish lands through ancient trade caravans, Silk Road merchants, and wandering storytellers. Although rarely seen in nature within Kurdistan, its presence in Kurdish literature, poetry, mystic teachings, and folk imagination is immense — far greater than its physical wings could ever reach.

A parrot of this kind is a radiant creature, measuring around forty centimetres with wings wide and flexible enough to glide through dense jungles. It shines with emerald-green feathers, golden and yellow hues, flashes of turquoise, and a curved expressive beak beside eyes full of intelligence and light. Long-lived and deeply social, it can survive forty to sixty years, giving it a human-like presence across generations — a perfect companion for myth and storytelling.

But what makes Tûtîy Zerîn unforgettable is not its colours, but its *voice*. Parrots are masters of mimicry, able to echo human speech, melodies, whistles, and emotional tones with stunning clarity. In Kurdish epics, Gorani poetry, and Sufi tales, the Golden Parrot often speaks like a wise companion, offering hidden truths, moral lessons, messages of love, or warnings dressed in beauty. Its voice is symbolic — a reminder that language is power, and that a single spoken truth can illuminate an entire heart.

Though it does not breed naturally in Kurdistan, in its native forests it lays a small clutch of eggs deep within tree hollows. Both parents guard the nest and raise young that live for decades, learning the songs and sounds of their family. This extraordinary lifespan is one reason Tûtîy Zerîn appears frequently in long Kurdish legends, sometimes outliving human characters and carrying their stories into new eras.

The parrot is a non-migratory forest dweller in the real world, flying with strong and flexible wingbeats through jungles, weaving between branches with ease. But in Kurdish mysticism, its flight represents something deeper — the ascent of the spirit, the freedom of thought, the journey toward truth, and the rise from ignorance into understanding. Even if its feathers never touched the Zagros or Ararat mountains, it flies freely through Kurdish imagination.

The Golden Parrot appears in Hawrami verse, in classical Gorani writings, in Persian and Sufi tales retold in Kurdish households, and in the ancient oral stories of dengbêjs. It symbolises eloquence, wisdom, spiritual knowledge, the beauty of truth spoken gently, and the sacred bond between word and heart. Poets describe Tûtîy Zerîn as a guide whose voice can open a closed spirit, whispering the secrets of love and human nature.

In the real world, the birds that inspired this legend face many dangers: habitat loss, illegal wildlife trade, capture for pet markets, and the disappearance of tropical forests. While the **symbolic** Golden Parrot of Kurdish culture is eternal, the living creatures behind its myth need protection and respect.

Yet in memory, story, and metaphor, **Tûtîy Zerîn remains untouched by time** — a colourful messenger of wisdom, a soft-tongued teller of secrets, and a reminder that the truest wings are sometimes made of words.

“Tûtîy Zerîn spoke the secrets of love,
not with its wings, but with its words.”
It taught generations that beauty lies in expression,
and truth, spoken gently, can heal a wounded heart.

It speaks the words the heart cannot,
a mirror of the soul in gold —
every feather a whisper
from the garden of light.

## 🦜 1.70- Tûtû Kurdistan / Tûtûî Kurdistanê / Tûtû Kurdî / Tûtî Kurdistan

## (توتو کوردستان / توتوی کوردستانێ / توتی کوردی / توتی کوردستان) — Wild Parrot of Kurdistan (Psittacula krameri)

**Tûtû Kurdistan – The Kurdistan Parrot**

The **Tûtû Kurdistan**, "the Parrot of Kurdistan," is one of the most joyful and colourful spirits of the land — a bird whose voice and feathers brighten the warm valleys and orchards of Southern and Eastern Kurdistan.
It thrives from Zaxo and Dihok to Sardasht and Meriwan, gliding across the groves of Kirmashan, following the Tigris River plains, and settling in the orchards of Rawanduz, Rojava's river forests, the Mosul basin, and the fertile farmlands of Xaneqîn.

A graceful member of the parakeet family, it is long and elegant, reaching over forty centimetres including its tail. Its plumage glows like a garden in spring — emerald green, a rose-pink ring around the neck of the males, a softer pale collar on the females, bright yellow eyes and a proud, curved red beak.
Tûtû Kurdistan can live for 25–30 years, carrying the memory of many seasons within its feathers.

Its voice is cheerful and musical — *"kiy-kiy, chree-chree!"* — echoing through orchards at dawn as flocks gather with laughter in their wings.
It is intelligent, social, playful, and fearless, flying in noisy, joyful groups above figs, mulberries, palms, and grain fields.
They share food with their mates, mimic sounds, investigate every branch, and fill the orchards with life.
They feed on fruit, grains, flower buds, tender kernels, and anything that tastes of sunlight.

When spring arrives, the breeding season begins.
They nest in tree hollows, cliff cracks, or old stone buildings, laying three to five white

eggs.
The female warms the eggs, while both parents feed the chicks beak-to-beak.
Their loyalty is legendary — lifelong pairs that stay close, groom each other, and raise their young like guardians of the green world.

Tûtû Kurdistan is not migratory.
It lives year-round in the warm valleys, travelling daily between feeding trees and roosting spots.
Its flight is quick, straight, and graceful, lifted by the long tail that shines like a green ribbon against the sky.
At sunrise and sunset, whole flocks rise together — a wave of emerald drifting over orchards.

For Kurdish people, the parrot is a symbol of **joy, companionship, wisdom, and good fortune**.
It has lived beside families for centuries, appearing in stories as a loyal friend, a bearer of laughter, and a gentle messenger of peace.
Elders say:

**“Where the Tûtû sings, peace takes root.”**

Children love it for its curiosity and bright colours; villagers love it for the happiness it brings to gardens and courtyards.

Yet this beloved bird faces dangers — shrinking forests, orchard loss, pesticides, winter cold, and illegal trapping.
But still it endures, strong and adaptable, its green wings carrying warmth across Kurdistan’s plains and river valleys — a living emblem of beauty and companionship in the land of mountains and rivers.

Green flame of the orchard,
laughter of the morning wind —
your song carries the colours
of Kurdistan’s heart.

## 🖤 1.71- Tûtîy Reş / Tûtî Reş / Tûtîya Reş (توتی ڕەش / تووتی ڕەش / تووتییا ڕەش) — Black Parrot (Psittacus erithacus var)

**Kewê Kermê — The Bird of the Sand**

The **Kewê Kermê**, the “bird of the sand,” is one of the quiet treasures of Kurdistan’s southern drylands — a delicate, desert-loving lark whose presence brings life to the warm, open plains of **Garmian, Halabja, Kalar, Kifri, Tuz Khurmatu, Chamchamal**, and the fertile **Shahrazur** valley. It also wanders along the sun-burnt foothills that stretch toward the deserts of Rojava — **Hesîçe, Qamişlo, and Kobanê**. Moving lightly through these semi-desert landscapes, this bird is perfectly adapted to heat, silence, and thirst.

Elegant yet humble, Kewê Kermê measures **17–20 cm**, with a wingspan of **35–40 cm**, its sandy-brown plumage patterned with streaks that disappear into the colour of the earth. When it rises into the air, its wings flash white and black — two brief, bright banners glowing against the golden plains. Its long, gently curved bill gives it a hoopoe-like silhouette, allowing it to probe deep into sand and soil for hidden worms and insects.
It is a true child of the Kurdish desert, carrying the calm endurance of the drylands in its small, determined body.

Its voice is one of the most haunting sounds of the southern plains — a soft, flute-like melody:
**“whir-liu-liu-tu-tu…”**
Rising from sand ridges, from low rocks, or from high circles in the air, the song floats like a thin thread of water through the hot, dry wind. It sings at dawn and again in the gentle breath of late afternoon, when the heat loosens its hold on the land.
Shepherds of Garmian and Halabja still say,
**“When Kewê Kermê sings, even the desert wind pauses to listen.”**

On the ground, the bird moves with quick, precise steps, often standing still for long moments until it becomes one with the land around it. Then — a flutter, a curve, a sudden rise — it lifts into the warm sky as if carried by the desert itself.

In spring, Kewê Kermê breeds across the dry plains of **Halabja, Garmian, Kalar, Kifri, Sinjar (Şingal)**, the desert edges of **Rojava**, and the warm valleys of **Shahrazur**. The female shapes a simple, hidden nest — a shallow cradle lined with fine grasses and roots, blending perfectly with the sand. She lays **three to four pale eggs**, the colour of dust and sunlight. Both parents feed and guard their young, teaching them the ancient secrets of finding food in silence and enduring heat.
For a bird so small, Kewê Kermê lives impressively long — **seven to nine years**, sustained by desert insects and a deep instinct for survival.

This species rarely migrates. It remains year-round in the plains of **Garmian, Rojava, Sinjar, Kalar**, and the edges of **Kermashan**, shifting only when winter winds push cold air across the mountains. Its flight begins with a brief flutter, then smoothens into a spiralling rise, drifting upward like a floating song carried by the warm currents of the desert.
Few sights in the drylands are as graceful as its small body turning soft circles under a pale sky.

Kewê Kermê lives close to Kurdish life — near shepherd paths, mud-brick villages, fallow fields, and old stone fences. It finds safety in the open grazing lands tended by generations of pastoral families. In Kurdish culture, it has long symbolised **endurance, quiet strength, balance, and dignity**. People of Garmian and Halabja say,
**“The desert keeps its secrets, but Kewê Kermê sings them softly.”**

Yet the bird faces growing threats: increasing desertification, drought, off-road vehicles flattening nests, heavy grazing that strips the land bare, military activity across open plains, and the rising heat of climate change. Even so, it remains one of the most resilient birds of the Kurdish south — a symbol of life surviving not through force, but through patience.

Wherever the plains of **Garmian, Sinjar, Halabja**, and the soft deserts of **Rojava** remain untouched, the delicate flight of Kewê Kermê still rises above the sand — a gentle reminder that even the emptiest landscapes carry their own music.

*A song of sand and wind,*
*a traveller without shadow —*
*your voice turns emptiness*
*into melody.*

## 🦢 1.72- Qaz / Qazî / Qez / Qoz (قاز / قەز / قۆز) — Geese (*Anser spp.*)

**Qaz — The Faithful Guardian of Rivers and Villages**

Along the rivers, lakes, and quiet farmlands of Kurdistan lives one of the oldest companions of the Kurdish people — **Qaz**, the Goose.
For thousands of years, this proud bird has walked beside our villages, cried its loud warnings across our valleys, and raised its young near the waters that give life to our land.

You can find Qaz wherever Kurdistan's waters gather: in the wetlands of **Duhok** and the green fields of **Qaladze**, along the marshy plains of **Rojava**, on the flowing riverbanks of **Kermashan**, and around the shining lakes and rivers of **Urmia**, **Dukan**, **Little Zab**, and **Mosul**. Wherever water runs, a goose family is never far behind — tall, calm, loyal, and unshakably protective.

Their bodies are large and elegant, shaped by centuries of walking alongside humans. Some geese wear soft greys, others pure white, others deep brown, but all carry the same proud features:
the long curved neck,
the bright orange beak,
the steady feet,
and the upright, confident walk of a creature that knows it belongs to the land.

They live long lives — fifteen, twenty, sometimes twenty-five years — and once they choose a partner, they rarely part. Kurdish villagers say that geese do not only mate for life — **they love for life.** If one dies, the other may remain alone for years, walking slowly by the water as if carrying a memory that cannot be replaced.

And their voice —
**"ga-ga-gaak!"** —
is loud enough to wake a village.

This cry echoes through river valleys at dawn, sounding like a drum of life. Many Kurdish shepherds say, smiling:
**“A goose guards a home better than a dog.”**
Because Qaz will never betray its family. It will stand, wings wide, neck high, shouting at danger with the courage of an animal far larger than itself.

In spring, when rain softens the earth, geese build their nests among reeds, grass, and riverbanks. The female sits patiently over her eggs — four, five, sometimes seven — while the male keeps watch nearby. When the chicks hatch, both parents walk with them to the water, teaching them the old rhythm of life that has repeated for countless generations.

Wild geese travel incredible distances, migrating in their famous V-shaped flocks. Every autumn and spring, they cross the skies of Kurdistan, their wings cutting through clouds above **Urmia Lake**, **Dukan**, **Mosul Dam**, the rivers of **Hawraman**, and the wetlands of **Rojava’s Khabur plains**.
They take turns leading, sharing strength, teaching the world that even in the sky, family and unity matter.

But not all geese migrate.
Many stay close to Kurdish homes year-round — bathing in village ponds, grazing near orchards, wandering between stone houses and irrigation channels. Their presence brings peace. Their return each year is seen as a blessing — a sign of spring rains, renewal, and the promise of abundance.

Yet the world around them is changing. Wetlands dry. Rivers shrink. Lakes become polluted. Hunters wait along migration routes. Cities expand into old marshes. In places like **Rojava**, **Garmian**, and the **Urmia basin**, the quiet world of Qaz grows smaller each season.

Still, the goose endures.

It stands tall on the edge of the river.

It calls loudly when dawn breaks.

It walks proudly beside Kurdish homes, guarding the land with ancient loyalty.

Qaz is more than a bird.

It is a symbol of devotion, of homecoming, of family that does not break —

a living echo of the Kurdish spirit, rooted in water, earth, and memory.

Across the misty lakes of Dukan,

their white wings carve the wind —

flying not away, but toward home,

where every river remembers their cry.

## 🦢 1.73- Quring / Qorîng (قۆرینگ / قورینگ) — Kurdistani Waterbird (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)

**Quring — The Ancient Companion of Kurdish Waters**

The Quring, often mislabeled in foreign books as the “Egyptian Goose,” is in truth a child of the Kurdish rivers — an ancient bird of Mesopotamia that has lived beside Kurdish villages since long before borders, nations, or names. It moves quietly through the wetlands of Duhok and Qaladze, glides over the still waters of Dukan Lake, and stands watch along the reed beds of Rojava and the shimmering shores of Lake Urmia. From the Little Zab and Sirwan rivers to the Mosul plains, Hawraman marshes, Kermashan riverlands, and the soft green edges of Garmian, Quring has always been a familiar presence — calm, loyal, and rooted in the breath of water.

Slightly smaller than Qaz, it carries the colours of earth and dusk: warm browns, soft greys, a dark patch on its chest, and a golden ring around each eye that glows like sunrise on the surface of a lake. With its long neck, elegant walk, and steady wings, Quring is one of the quiet beauties of Kurdish wetlands — a gentle spirit that follows the rhythm of water and reeds.

Its voice is a deep, echoing **“haunk-haunk-haaa,”** rolling across lakes at dawn and dusk. Villagers hear it before they see it — two birds flying low over the river, always together, always side by side. Quring rarely travels alone. It is a bird of partnership, of companionship, of life shared. Kurdish elders say that if a Quring pair stays by a home, peace will settle on the family.

Quring builds its nest close to water — hidden among reeds, on small islands, or sometimes inside hollow trees where river winds cannot reach. The female lays her pale eggs, and both parents guard them fiercely, raising their chicks with deep devotion. The young follow their parents to the water within hours of hatching, tiny brown shadows learning the ancient memory of wetlands. Quring pairs often remain

together for life; if one partner dies, the other may wander alone for years — a symbol of love that does not break.

Most Quring stay all year in Kurdistan, moving only when rivers shrink or winters freeze the shallows. Others drift gently between wetlands, following the quiet pull of water. Their flight is strong but low, skimming over lake surfaces in calm, steady lines — a movement that mirrors the flow of the rivers themselves.

Quring lives close to Kurdish life yet keeps a respectful distance. You will find it near quiet reed beds, irrigation channels, lakeside orchards, and the still corners of river deltas. It watches, listens, moves softly. It asks for nothing but water, reeds, and a place to stand beside the sky.

But the world around it has changed. Wetlands are drying under shifting climates. Rivers are polluted. Reed beds are cut. Marshes that once held entire worlds of life are shrinking day by day. Hunting adds pressure, and war has damaged waterways once rich with birdsong. Quring grows fewer each year in places like Urmia, Garmian, and the Jazira plains of Rojava.

And yet, where water still breathes — where reeds still whisper, where the river bends gently around villages — the Quring still stands. A quiet guardian of Kurdish wetlands. A symbol of loyalty, devotion, and the ancient companionship between the Kurdish people and the life of the rivers.

A bird that has watched this land for thousands of years
— and still remembers every note of its story.

Along the quiet waters of Duhok,
they glide side by side —
not as wanderers,
but as keepers of peace and memory.

## 🦆 1.74- Mirawî Xaniyê / Batê Xaniyê / Mirawî Mala Kurdistanê

(مراوی مالّێ / بەتێ خانێ / مراوی کوردستانێ) — **The Home Duck of Kurdistan**

*(Anas platyrhynchos domesticus — Rural Kurdish Duck types)*

**Mirawî Xaniyê — The Home Duck of Kurdistan**

The Mirawî Xaniyê, known lovingly as the “Home Duck of Kurdistan,” is one of the warmest symbols of village life across the mountains and plains of our homeland. It walks slowly through the orchards of Silemanî, wanders between the pomegranate gardens of Halabja, rests beside the irrigation canals of Garmiyan, and swims in the quiet waters of Dukan, Darbandikhan, and Serchinar. In Eastern Kurdistan, it is a familiar companion in the courtyards of Mahabad, Bokan, Merîwan and Sardasht, while in Northern Kurdistan it lives peacefully in the farmyards of Amed, Colemêrg, Wan, Riha and Semsûr. Across Rojava, from Afrin to Hesekê, its gentle steps and soft calls bring comfort to every home.

Smaller than the large white Pekin duck but full of charm and character, this domestic duck usually measures 45–55 cm and weighs between 2–4 kg. Its colours vary from pure white to soft cream, light brown, speckled grey, and sometimes a beautiful mix of green and brown on the head of the male. Its round, gentle body and short orange legs give it a slightly humorous, beloved look — a true friend of Kurdish households.

The Mirawî Xaniyê is a peaceful, friendly, and curious duck. It loves wandering between vegetable gardens, following children around the yard, and dipping its beak into shallow water in search of seeds, insects, and small plants. You will often see it waddling in groups, exploring every corner of the farm with a soft “wak-wak” that blends naturally with the sounds of village life. In the early morning, its calls echo together with the crowing of roosters, the movement of sheep, and the flowing of spring water.

This duck is deeply connected to Kurdish family life. Many families keep a small group near the house not only for eggs, but also for companionship. Children grow up feeding

them by hand, sometimes giving them names, and watching the tiny ducklings follow their mother like a row of golden pearls. The bond between villagers and these ducks is old and emotional — they are part of the household, treated with kindness and familiarity.

During spring, the Mirawî Xaniyê begins its nesting season. It builds a soft cup-shaped nest from straw and feathers under fig trees, behind clay ovens, or near water tanks. Laying 80–160 eggs a year, it offers families a steady supply of rich, nutritious eggs. Each clutch usually contains 8–12 eggs, and when the ducklings hatch, their tiny yellow bodies, soft squeaks, and quick movements bring joy to everyone in the home. The mother leads them to the nearest puddle or stream, teaching them to swim within hours of birth.

Although capable of short flights, the Home Duck rarely leaves the ground for long. Its life is tied to the household — eating grains scattered by farmers, bathing in shallow basins or small ponds, and resting in shaded corners during hot summer afternoons. It is an excellent swimmer and a gentle presence, gliding across still water with small ripples that brighten the landscape.

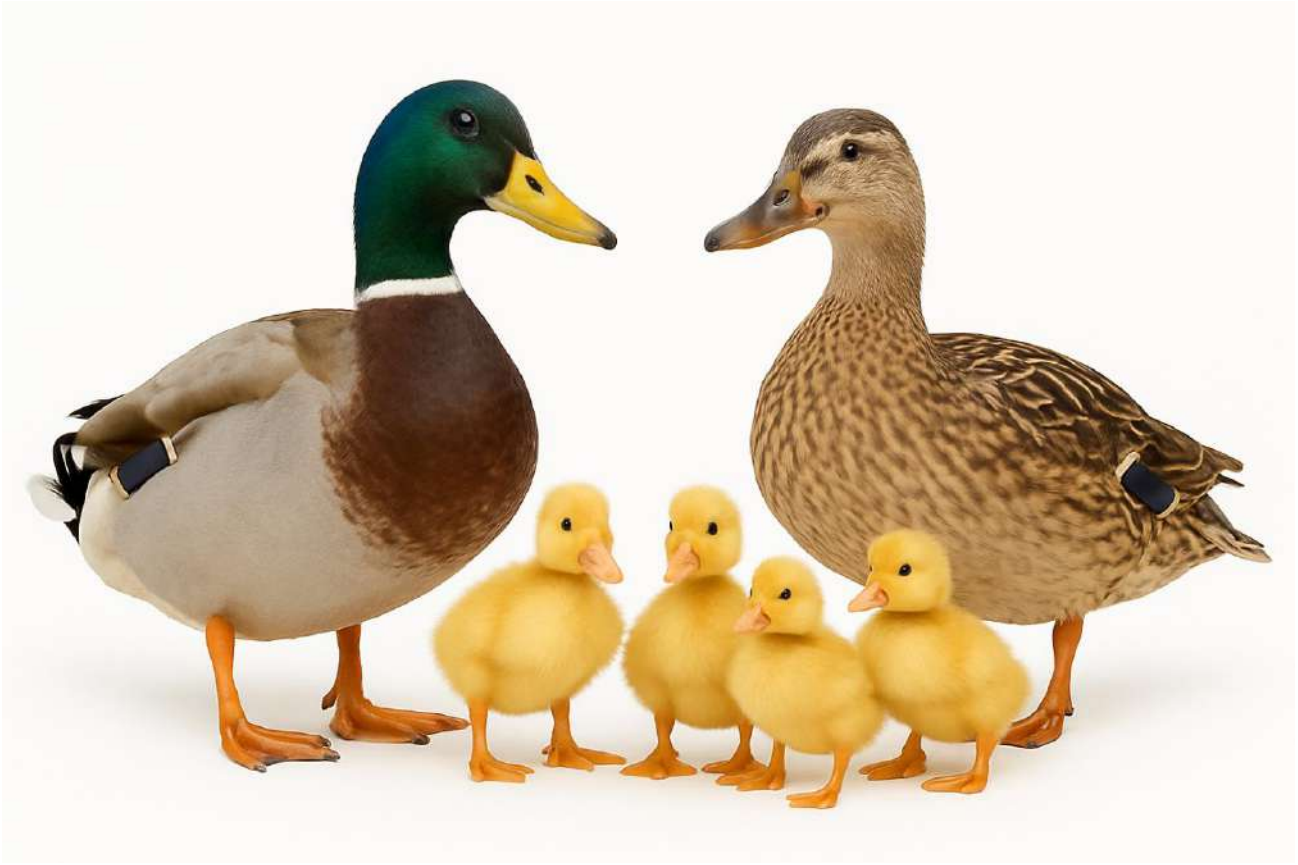
For Kurdish families, the Mirawî Xaniyê is more than a farm animal. It symbolises **hospitality, calmness, blessing, and the peaceful rhythm of rural life**. In many villages, ducks walk freely through courtyards, under walnut trees, around ancient tandoors, and along riverbanks, their presence believed to bring prosperity and protection to the home. Their eggs, feathers, and warm companionship have supported families for generations.

Yet, like many rural animals of Kurdistan, this duck faces modern challenges — shrinking green spaces, drought, polluted water, foxes and stray dogs, and the decline of traditional village farming. Still, it remains one of the strongest and most loved symbols of Kurdish home life: adaptable, gentle, and loyal to the land.

By the doorway, beside the clay wall,
a soft call rises with the dawn—

small feet in the morning dust,

a simple peace walking home.



## 🦆 1.75- Mirawî Spî / Bat Spî / Batê Spî / Mirawî Kurdî

## (مراوی سپی / بەت سپی / بەتێ سپی / مراوی کوردی) — Pekin Duck (Anas platyrhynchos domesticus)

**Mirawî Spî — The White Duck of Kurdistan**

The **Mirawî Spî**, the beloved White Duck of Kurdistan, is one of the most familiar and comforting sights across the valleys and villages of Southern and Eastern Kurdistan. It walks gently along the riverbanks of **Soran, Shaqlawa, Koya, Garmian, Halabja, Penjwen, Chamchamal, Kalar**, and wanders peacefully through the fertile plains of **Hewlêr and Kirkuk**. You can see it gliding through the waters of **Rawanduz, Dukan, Darbandikhan, Sirwan, and the Little Zab**, or resting in the quiet rural corners of **Mahabad, Urmia, Sardasht, Merîwan, Bokan, and Kirmashan**. In the north and west, it also lives among the farmyards and orchards of **Zaxo, Duhok, Amedi**, and many villages of **Rojava**, especially around **Afrin, Kobanê, Hesekê, and Qamishlo**.

Large and graceful, measuring **50–60 cm** long and weighing between **3–5 kilograms**, this domestic duck carries a gentle dignity. Its feathers are pure white, glowing even in dusty courtyards, and its bright orange beak and feet shine like warm autumn leaves. The Mirawî Spî is calm, patient, and deeply connected to human life. It moves slowly in groups, following irrigation channels, paddling in ponds, and wandering among orchards and farm paths with a soft, harmonious presence.

Its voice — the familiar **“quack-quack”** — is part of the morning music of Kurdish villages, blending with the sound of roosters, shepherd dogs, and flowing water. Peaceful by nature, it spends its days swimming, foraging, and following farmers who scatter grain in fields. It rarely strays far from people, living comfortably among gardens, courtyards, and riversides. In many homes, these ducks are treated almost like family: trusted, harmless companions that children feed by hand.

Every spring, the Mirawî Spî begins its long season of laying. Kurdish families have relied on its generosity for generations, for a single duck can lay **120–200 eggs per year**. In quiet corners of barns or near water, it builds a soft nest of straw and feathers, laying **eight to fifteen** warm, speckled eggs at a time. Both the male and female guard their ducklings, guiding the small, yellow, fluffy young through grass, puddles, and shallow water. A Mirawî Spî may live **eight to ten years**, remaining close to the home that raised it.

Unlike wild ducks, the Mirawî Spî does not fly far. It lifts only a short distance off the ground before settling back into its familiar world of ponds and gardens. Its life is tied to the land and to the hands that care for it — a creature shaped by centuries of Kurdish farming traditions. It is an excellent swimmer, drifting across still water with a calm ease that brings peace to those who watch it.

For Kurdish families, this duck is more than an animal. It represents **purity, calmness, and blessing**. Many villages keep Mirawî Spî around homes and even near holy sites, believing that their presence brings serenity. Their white feathers symbolise peace, and their gentle habits give life a softer rhythm. They walk freely through courtyards, orchards, and riverbanks as if they, too, are part of the household.

Though not endangered, the Mirawî Spî faces modern challenges — the decline of traditional farming, shrinking ponds due to drought, polluted rivers, foxes and stray dogs, and the loss of small farm communities as families move to cities. Yet this duck remains strong in the valleys of Kurdistan, cherished and protected, its white wings reflecting the simplicity and purity of rural life.

*White wings by the village pond,*
*peace walks upon your steps —*
*your soft voice breaks the silence*
*of a golden morning.*

## 🦆 1.76- Mirawî Rûmet Sor / Mirawî Reş (مراوی ڕۆمەت سوور/ مراوی ڕەش) — Muscovy Duck (Cairina moschata)

**Mirawî Rûmet Sor — The Red-Faced Duck of Kurdistan**

The **Mirawî Rûmet Sor**, the red-faced duck, has become a gentle and familiar companion in many Kurdish villages — a calm, wise-looking bird that walks slowly across farmyards and orchards as if it has lived here for centuries. Though its ancestors came from faraway lands, it has found a perfect home in the rural heart of Kurdistan, settling beside ponds, rivers, and family courtyards across **Garmian, Kalar, Chamchamal, Halabja, Penjwen, Soran, Shaqlawa, Koya, Hewlêr**, and the warm plains of **Kirkuk**. It thrives equally in **Rwanduz, Dukan, Darbandikhan, Sirwan**, and the northern valleys of **Zaxo, Duhok, Amedi, Akre**, and can be seen across parts of Rojava — **Qamishlo, Hesekê, Derik, Afrin** — as well as in Eastern Kurdistan around **Mahabad, Urmia, Sardasht, Bokan, Meriwan**, and **Kirmashan**.

Larger and heavier than the Mirawî Spî, this striking duck measures **70–85 cm** and carries a wingspan of up to **150 cm**, with a body weight between **4 and 6 kilograms**. What gives it its unmistakable character is its bright red, bumpy facial skin — the caruncles — that give it the appearance of a bird both ancient and noble. Its plumage varies widely: sometimes pure white, like a drifting cloud over the fields, and sometimes a mixture of black and white with deep metallic greens and purples shining under the Kurdish sun.
Its posture is steady and grounded, moving with a calm presence that makes it feel like a quiet elder of the farmyard.

Unlike most ducks, the Mirawî Rûmet Sor does not quack. Instead, it communicates through soft hisses, gentle murmurs, low coos, and breathy calls during courtship. These quiet sounds give it a mysterious, peaceful aura, as if it speaks in a secret language understood only by those who share the land closely with it. It walks slowly beneath shade, prefers calm corners near water, and forms steady family groups that

move together with quiet purpose. Strong claws allow it to perch on **trees, rooftops, and fences**, making it one of the few ducks in Kurdistan that can climb and rest high above the ground.

In spring, the Mirawî Rûmet Sor becomes a devoted parent. The female builds a simple nest hidden in reeds or quiet farm corners, laying **8–16 large white eggs** and incubating them alone. She is a fierce protector of her ducklings, spreading her wings wide and hissing loudly when danger approaches. The young grow quickly, becoming strong walkers and swimmers within days. These ducks often live **eight to twelve years**, becoming long-term companions of the Kurdish families who raise them.

Unlike most domestic ducks, the Mirawî Rûmet Sor is an excellent flyer. It can lift its heavy body with surprising strength, gliding over fields, perching on house walls, or landing smoothly on tree branches. For rural families, watching these ducks fly above the farm is a reminder of their faraway origins — a quiet echo of distant forests and ancient rivers.

Kurdish villagers value this duck not only for its meat and hardiness but also for its calm nature. It needs little care, finds much of its own food, rarely falls sick, and protects its young with remarkable courage. Children often watch it wander between orchards and courtyards like a patient guardian of the household. Elders say that the Mirawî Rûmet Sor brings **baraka** — blessing — because it is peaceful, watchful, and carries itself with the dignity of a long journeyer who has chosen Kurdish soil as its final home.

Though the species itself is not endangered, its well-being in Kurdistan depends on clean water, safe farm ponds, and protection from predators. As wetlands shrink and climate shifts reshape the land, the spaces where this duck thrives slowly change. Yet despite these challenges, it remains one of the most adaptable and beloved farm birds in Kurdish villages — a living guest from distant lands that has woven itself into the everyday rhythm of Kurdish life.

*Red-faced traveller, silent in the dawn,*
*your wings remember distant forests —*

*yet here, beside Kurdish ponds,*

*you rest like an old friend of the earth.*

## 💧 1. 77- Mirawî Kêwî (مروای کێوی) — White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*)

**Mirawî Kêwî — The Sacred Duck of the Northern Lakes**

The **Mirawî Kêwî**, the "wild duck" of the Kurdish mountains, is one of the rarest and most noble waterbirds of the homeland. It lives on the high, cold lakes and quiet wetlands of **Northern and Western Kurdistan**, where winter winds sweep across vast water: the shimmering expanse of **Lake Van**, the peaceful waters of **Lake Duhok**, and the ancient, reed-lined marshes of **Qandil, Mahabad, and Piranshar**.

Once common, it is now seen only in moments of stillness — a solitary shape drifting like a sacred emblem on the water, silent as dawn. It is a compact, powerful diver, measuring around **43–48 cm**, with wings spanning **60–70 cm**, built for a life of deep, mysterious waters. The male is unforgettable: a glowing **white head**, a **black crown**, a shining **sky-blue bill**, and a body of rich **chestnut brown**. The female carries softer colours — gentle browns and greys with a dark stripe across the face — blending quietly with the reeds.

Mirawî Kêwî dives with grace and precision, disappearing beneath the surface for long stretches, feeding on underwater plants, seeds, beetles, snails, and tiny creatures hidden below. It rises without a sound, a small ripple on the skin of the lake.

Its voice is soft — a gentle *"whuk-whuk"* — heard only when spring warms the marshes and the males display their bright blue bills to attract a mate. It swims slowly, with

purpose, and prefers the deepest parts of quiet wetlands. Shy around humans, it slips into the dense reed forests whenever footsteps draw near.

In late spring, when the wind softens over **Van**, **Duhok**, and **Urmia**, the Mirawî Kêwî builds its nest. Hidden deep within the reeds, its floating platform sways gently with the movement of the lake. The female lays her eggs — pale, delicate — and tends them with great devotion while the male guards the outer reed walls. The chicks learn to dive almost as soon as they enter the world, following their parents through narrow green tunnels of reeds, vanishing and reappearing in little bursts of light. These ducks live around **10–15 years**, always close to the waters that shaped them.

Mirawî Kêwî is partly migratory. In mild winters, it stays on the lakes of Van and Urmia; in harsh ones, it moves south only a short distance, never straying far from the comfort of deep water. Its flight is strong and low, gliding from lake to marsh like a shadow painted on the wind.

For Kurdish families living near these lakes, this duck was once a sacred presence — a gentle spirit of the water. Villagers believed that when the Mirawî Kêwî floated at dawn, it carried prayers across the horizon, whispering blessings over the water. It symbolised **peace, purity, protection, and the calm soul of the wetland**. Many communities refused to hunt it, believing it to be blessed.

But today, the Mirawî Kêwî stands on the edge of disappearance. Wetlands shrink year after year. Pollution poisons the water. Marshes are drained. Hunting continues in some regions. Water is diverted, lakes dry, and the silence where this duck once swam grows larger each season.

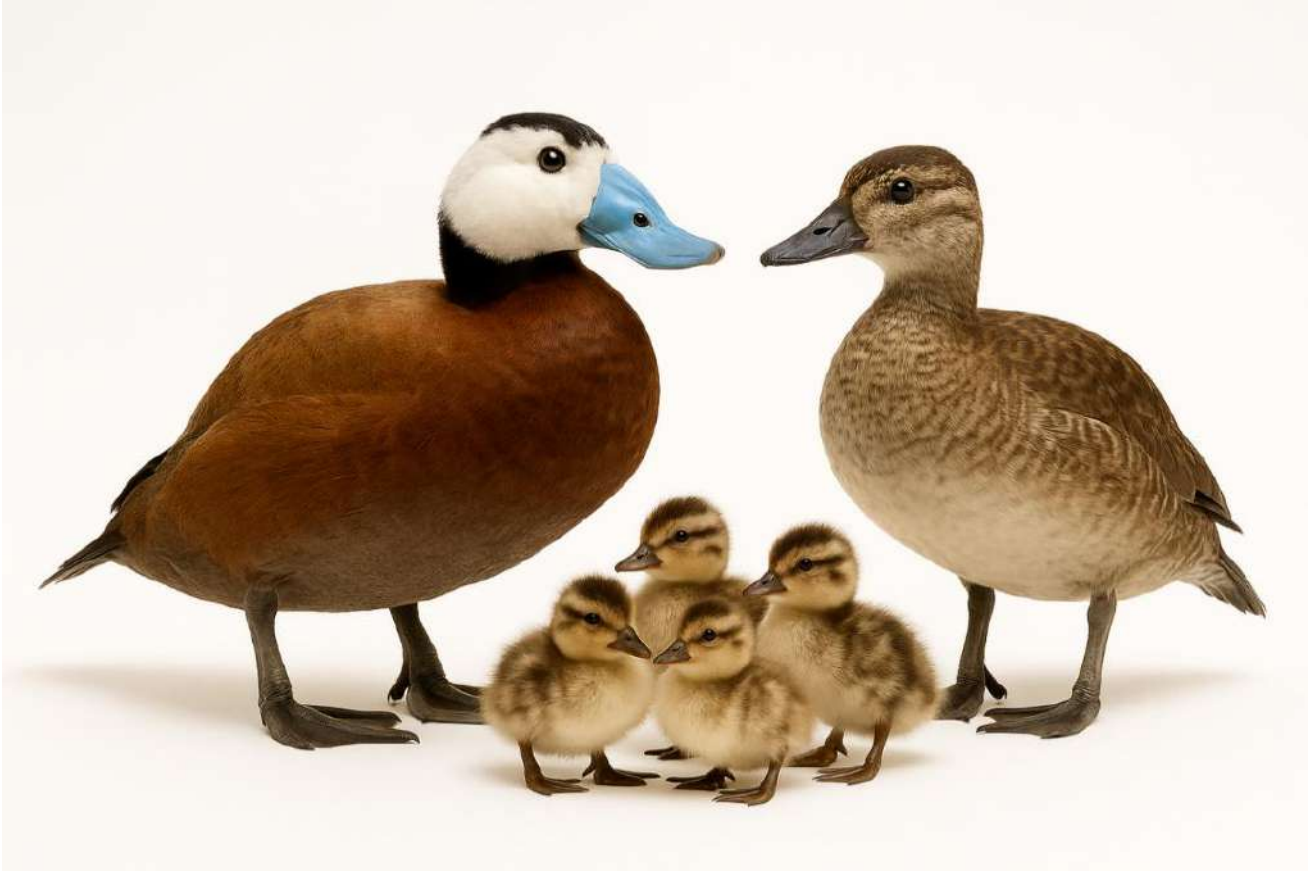
Still, in those rare places where the water remains clean and reeds still sway in the wind, the Mirawî Kêwî glides at dawn — a fragile jewel of the Kurdish wild, a last whisper of the lakes that once stretched wide and free.

*White head, blue beak,*

*saint of the silent lake —*

*you float between earth and heaven,*

*where prayers take wing.*



## 1.78- Mrîşke Awiyê Reşk / Mrîşka Awiyê Reşk / Qewê Awiyê Reşk / Quringê Reşk ( مریشکە ئاویەی ڕەش / مریشکا ئاویێ ڕەش / قەوێ ئاویێ ڕەش / قورینگە ڕەش) — Coot (Fulica atra)

**Mrîşke Awiyê Reşk — The Black Waterbird of Kurdistan**

The **Mrîşke Awiyê Reşk**, the “Black Waterbird” of Kurdistan, is one of the most familiar and resilient spirits of the country’s lakes and wetlands. Wherever calm water meets reeds — in the quiet mornings of **Lake Dukan**, the broad shallows of **Darbandikhan**, the winding stretches of the **Sirwan basin** and **Little Zab**, the shores of **Duhok Lake**, the vast blue mirror of **Wan (Van)**, the riverlands of **Hasankeyf**, the marshes of **Rojava**, and the fertile plains of **Penjwin, Urmia, Kermashan, Ilam, Meriwan, Halabja, Baxcha, Koya, and Raniya** — this dark, elegant bird glides like a moving shadow.

Measuring around **36–42 cm** long and weighing nearly a kilogram, the coot is instantly recognised by its deep soot-black plumage, its shining white beak and forehead shield, and its glowing red eyes that catch the evening light like hot embers. On still water, it appears almost carved from the lake itself — a dark leaf drifting across a silver surface.

Mrîşke Awiyê Reşk thrives in all waters of Kurdistan: slow rivers, natural lakes, reed-filled marshlands, and even man-made reservoirs and dams. Thanks to its unusual lobed toes — not webbed like a duck’s, but shaped like flexible paddles — it swims with remarkable strength. Below the water it moves as confidently as above, diving for aquatic plants, shoots, small insects, and the delicate life hidden among reeds.

Calm in appearance, the coot possesses a spirited heart. During the breeding season, it fiercely defends its small territory, splashing the water with rapid strikes of its feet and wings, chasing away intruders, and filling the air with its sharp call — **“kik-kik-kik!”** — a metallic sound that echoes through the reeds at dusk. Kurdish fishermen along the Sirwan or Derik wetlands often say that the coot’s cry is “the heartbeat of the marsh.”

When spring arrives, the coots begin their delicate craft of building floating nests — wide platforms of reeds and water plants anchored among tall rushes. The female lays **six to ten speckled eggs**, and both parents share the work of caring for their young. The chicks are one of the loveliest sights of Kurdish wetlands: tiny black bodies with bright red-orange heads, glowing like sparks drifting across the water. As they grow, their colour softens into grey until they finally transform into the dark adults that carry the dignity of the species.

Among Kurdish villagers, Mrîşke Awiyê Reşk is often called **"Parêzvaniya Avên Aram" — the Guardian of Still Waters**. People believe its presence reveals the health of a wetland: clean water, living reeds, and the spirit of the marsh preserved. Old sayings whisper through the fishing villages:
*"If the coot cries before sunrise, rain is near,"*
and
*"Where the black waterbird nests, the water has soul."*
Children in **Amedi** and **Rojava** adore it for its bright eyes, calling it "the bird with fire eyes."

Although common, the Black Waterbird faces many of the same hardships as the land itself: polluted waters, shrinking marshes, heavy hunting, disappearing reeds, and the dramatic losses that affect places like **Lake Urmia**, once one of the largest saltwater lakes in the region. Yet the coot remains one of the most adaptable birds in Kurdistan. It thrives even in human-created lakes — Dukan Dam, Darbandikhan, Mosul Dam, and the irrigation wetlands of Rojava — proving its remarkable ability to live alongside people.

*Black mirror on silver lake,*
*gliding through reeds in silence —*
*its white crown catches the dawn,*
*the keeper of quiet waters.*

## 1.79- Mrîşkê Awiyê Biçûk / Mrîşka Awiyê Biçûk / Qewê Awiyê Piçûk / Quringê Biçûk ( / مریشکاویەیی چووکە / مریشکێ ئاویێ بچووك / مریشکا ئاویێ بچووك / قەوێ ئاویە پچووك / قورینگە بچووك) — Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis)

**Mrîşkê Awiyê Biçûk — The Little Waterbird of Kurdistan**

The **Mrîşkê Awiyê Biçûk**, the “Little Waterbird” or “Blue Water Bird” of Kurdistan, is one of the region’s most enchanting creatures — tiny, quiet, and masterful in the water. Though small in size, it moves with an elegance that belongs only to the wetlands of Kurdistan. You can find it wherever calm water creates hidden ways between reeds: in the still blue of **Dukan** and **Darbandikhan**, among the pond systems of **Ranya, Qaladze, Soran**, and **Rawanduz**, in the shimmering basins of **Duhok** and **Akre**, in the sheltered wetlands of **Amedi**, and across the great lakes and marshes of **Urmia, Meriwan, Kermashan, Ilam, Sardasht**, and **Sanandaj (Sine)**. It also thrives in the quiet reedbeds of **Rojava** — Derik, Hesekê, and along the Khabur — and in the northern waters of **Wan (Van), Hakkari, Erzurum**, and the foothills of **Agirî**.

Floating low on the water, almost hugging its own reflection, this charming bird measures only **23–29 cm**, with a wingspan barely reaching **40–45 cm**. Its body is rounded and compact, with a tiny pointed bill and a short tail that lifts like a little flag. In spring, its dark head and chestnut-red neck glow beautifully against the mirror of Kurdish ponds, a gentle flame above the water’s quiet surface.

Mrîşkê Awiyê Biçûk prefers small lakes, irrigation ponds near villages, reeds that hide the wind, and the forgotten edges of rivers where human footsteps rarely disturb the silence. It is one of the finest divers in nature. With a simple tilt of its body, it slips underwater like a stone and reappears several meters away without a sound — a perfect vanishing act.
There, below the surface, it hunts for tiny fish, tadpoles, insects, water beetles, and the delicate life that lives among roots and reeds. When danger approaches, it does not fly

— it simply sinks into the water and disappears, re-emerging only when the threat has passed.

Its soft call — **“vit-vit, vit-vit”** — drifts across the reeds during misty Kurdish dawns, often carrying far over ponds that look like silver sheets under early sunlight. Many shepherds waking early have heard this little voice calling from the hidden heart of the marsh.

When spring warms the land, the pair begins building their floating home — a nest woven from reeds, anchored gently among the plants. The female lays **four to six pale eggs**, often covering them with wet leaves whenever she leaves, protecting them from the eyes of predators.
The chicks, small and striped in black and white, are a joy to behold. For the first weeks of their lives, they ride on the backs of their parents, disappearing safely beneath feathers whenever danger approaches. This tender sight — tiny lives carried gently across the water — remains one of the most magical scenes in Kurdish wetlands.

In Kurdish folklore, this little bird is known as **Şopkera Razan — the Diver of Secrets**. Its ability to vanish underwater makes it a symbol of quiet strength, inner knowledge, and stillness. Villagers say, *“The silent diver keeps the water pure,”* and shepherds believe that if it calls in the morning fog, rain is coming. In parts of Amedi and Hawraman, people even whisper that the bird watches over the spirits of the water.

Though still widespread, the Mrîşkê Awiyê Biçûk depends deeply on clean, undisturbed wetlands. Pollution, reed burning, drought, and the draining of village ponds threaten its peaceful world. The lowering of water in dams and reservoirs, especially around Urmia and southern wetlands, has also challenged its survival.
But wherever the reeds stand tall and the water remains calm, the **Kewê Şîn Avê** — the Blue Water Bird — continues to glide and disappear, a quiet guardian of the ancient balance between land and water.

*On the mirror of still ponds,*
*it dives into silence —*

*a shadow of water,*

*a keeper of quiet worlds*.

## 🌊 1.80- Şehên Avê / Şehê Awî / Şahên Awê

## (شەهێ ئاوی / شەهێ ئاوێ / شاهێ ئاوی) — Great Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo)

**Şehên Avê — The King of the Water**

The **Şehên Avê**, the "king of the water," is one of the most commanding and disciplined birds found across the rivers and great lakes of Kurdistan. It rules the watery world of the homeland with a quiet, ancient authority — gliding through the calm surfaces of **Lake Duhok, Lake Van (Wan), Lake Urmia, Dukan, Darbandikhan**, and the long, winding courses of the **Little Zab, Greater Zab, and Sirwan River**. Its shadow is also familiar along the Euphrates valleys of Rojava — **Qamişlo, Kobanê, Hesîçe** — and around the riverlands of **Amedi, Zaxo, Ranya, Koya, Hewlêr, Mahabad, Sine, Kermashan, Kirkuk**, and the wetlands of Rojhilat.

This powerful waterbird measures **80–100 cm**, with wide wings of **130–160 cm**, and a deep, sleek body weighing up to **3.5 kilograms**. Its feathers, dark as wet stone, shimmer with hints of blue and green when sunlight touches them. During breeding season, pale white patches appear on its face and throat, giving it the noble look of an ancient guardian. It swims low in the water, almost entirely submerged except for its long neck — a silent hunter waiting for the perfect moment to dive.

The behaviour of Şehên Avê reflects patience and mastery. It slips beneath the water in long, smooth dives, chasing fish with its sharp, hooked bill. Often only its head remains above water as it glides like a shadow across the surface. Along the rocky shores of **Wan, Urmia, and Duhok**, it stands on boulders with wings stretched wide to dry — an iconic sight known to fishermen and villagers throughout Kurdistan.
Its voice, a deep croaking **"karr-karr"**, echoes across the lakes at dusk when it returns to its resting places.

Fishermen along the rivers say, **“When Şehên Avê rises from the water, the river breathes again.”**

Breeding colonies gather around lake islands and river forests, especially in **Urmia, Duhok, Greater Zab, Little Zab, Sirwan**, and the wetlands of **Sine and Mahabad**. The birds build large nests of sticks in trees, cliffs, or tall reeds. Inside these platforms, the female lays **three to five pale blue eggs**, and both parents share the work of warming and feeding the chicks with freshly caught fish.
Şehên Avê may live **15–20 years**, returning faithfully to the same colony every spring, as if honouring the memory of its ancestors.

Some birds remain in Kurdistan all year, especially in **Duhok, Rojava, Urmia, and Van**, while others shift southward during harsh winters. In flight, it travels low over water, its long neck stretched forward, wings beating slowly and powerfully. Small groups often glide together above the Zab and Sirwan rivers, their reflections trailing like shadows on the water’s surface.

For Kurdish communities living near lakes and rivers, Şehên Avê has long been respected as a symbol of **discipline, endurance, and self-reliance**. Fishermen once believed that if the bird sat calmly on a rock, the waters beneath were rich with fish. In villages around **Amedi, Zaxo, Rojava, and Urmia**, its wing-spreading pose was seen as a gesture of purity and renewal — a moment when the bird cleanses itself with sun and sky, and the water beneath receives its blessing.
It is remembered as a quiet guardian of the rivers, a creature that watches over the shores with steady patience.

Yet even this strong and ancient bird faces danger. Polluted rivers, shrinking wetlands, overfishing, disturbance of nesting colonies, and entanglement in nets all threaten its future. In some places, the waters themselves are changing — fewer fish, fewer reeds, fewer quiet places to rest.

But where the rivers still run clean — along the **Zab, Sirwan, Duhok**, and the wide waters of **Van and Urmia** — the Şehên Avê still reigns with dark, dignified grace, moving like a silent king across the mirror of Kurdistan's lakes.

*Dark-winged king of rivers,*
*you dive where light cannot reach —*
*surfacing with silver dreams*
*from the heart of the deep.*

## 💧 1.81- Mrîşkê Awiyê / Mrîşke Awiye / Mirîşke Awe

### (مریشکێ ئاویێ / مریشکه ئاویه / مریشکه ئاوه) — Water Rail / Moorhen (Rallus aquaticus / Gallinula chloropus)

**Mrîşkê Awiyê — The Water Chicken of Kurdistan**

The **Mrîşkê Awiyê**, the “chicken of the water,” is one of the most secretive and enchanting spirits of Kurdistan’s wetlands. It slips like a shadow through reeds and floating leaves, revealing itself only through soft ripples or a sudden movement among the marsh grasses.
It lives across the marshes and riverbanks of **Zaxo, Duhok, Urmia**, and throughout the plains and waterways of **Rojava**. It is also found in many of Kurdistan’s hidden wetlands — the quiet shores of **Van (Wan), Mahabad, Sine, Kermashan, Slemani, Kirkuk, Hawraman valleys, the Sirwan basin, Little Zab marshes, Botan wetlands, Amed’s riverbanks, Qamişlo, Kobanê**, and countless reedbeds stretching along the **Zagros foothills**.

A medium-sized wetland bird, it measures **25–35 cm**, though it often seems smaller as it melts into the reeds. Its plumage is dark olive-brown and gentle grey, its legs long and green like water plants, and its bill bright red or orange — a flash of colour in a world of shadows. Its slender body allows it to glide through dense reeds as if it were part of the water itself, walking over floating leaves with delicate steps.

Its voice, however, betrays its presence.
At dawn or dusk, the marshes echo with its sharp, squealing cry — *“kweeerrr-kweeek!”* — a call that carries far across the silent waters of Urmia and Rojava.
Though shy, it speaks loudly, as if announcing that every hidden life has a place in the world.

The Mrîşkê Awiyê spends its days moving through narrow reed tunnels it creates itself. It rarely flies, preferring to run, slip, and weave between stems. It swims quietly, barely

disturbing the surface — a ghost of the marsh. It is most active at sunrise and sunset, when the wetlands glow with soft light.

In spring, it builds floating nests deep among the reeds. These reed cradles, hidden from wind and eyes, hold **6–10 speckled eggs**. The chicks swim within hours of hatching, following their parents through the secret corridors of the marsh. With good water and peaceful wetlands, the Mrîşkê Awiyê can live **up to ten years**.

It is mostly a resident bird in Kurdistan, staying year-round in mild wetlands like Rojava, Zaxo, and Duhok. When the lakes of Van or Urmia freeze, it moves quietly to lower valleys, never far, never truly leaving home. Its flight is short and heavy, meant only to escape danger or cross to another reedbed.

To Kurdish villagers living near reeds and rivers, the Mrîşkê Awiyê represents **quiet resilience, peace, and gentle strength**.
Elders say its presence calms the water and blesses the morning.
Because it is hidden but speaks loudly, people often use it as a metaphor for those who are humble yet powerful in spirit — those whose voices matter even when their bodies remain unseen.

But this delicate bird faces many dangers.
Wetlands are disappearing — dried by drought, burned for farming, polluted by plastic and chemicals, cut by roads and dams, and disrupted by human noise.
Where reeds fall, the Mrîşkê Awiyê has nowhere to hide.
Its fate is tied to the fate of Kurdistan’s waterways.

Yet wherever water still flows gently, wherever reeds whisper in the wind, the Mrîşkê Awiyê continues to glide — a quiet emblem of endurance, peace, and wild beauty in Kurdistan’s heart.

Between reeds and reflections,
you move unseen —
a spirit of still waters,
whispering peace to the marsh.

## 🐔 1.82- Mrîşkî Kurdî / Mirîşke Kurdî / Mrîşka Kurdî

**(مریشکی کوردی / مریشکە کوردی / مریشکا کوردی) — Kurdish Chicken (Gallus gallus domesticus)**

## 🐓 Kojî Kurdî / Koja Kurdî / Kûjî Kurdî / Keleşêr/ Kelebaba

**(کوجی کوردی / کوجە کوردی / کوجیە کوردی / کەڵەشێر / کەڵەباب) — Kurdish Rooster (Gallus gallus domesticus)**

**Mrîşkî Kurdî & Kojî Kurdî — The Birds of Kurdish Dawn**

The **Mrîşkî Kurdî** and **Kojî Kurdî** — the Kurdish hen and rooster — are among the oldest living companions of Kurdish families, their presence woven into thousands of years of mountain life. From the villages of **Hewlêr, Soran, Rawanduz, Shaqlawa, Ranya, Qaladze, Halabja, Garmian, Kalar, Chamchamal, and Sulaymaniyah** to the highlands of **Amed, Botan, Van, Hakkari, Şemzînan, Colemêrg**, and across the warm plains of **Qamishlo, Hesekê, Afrin, Kobanê, Derik**, all the way to the orchards and foothills of **Mahabad, Bokan, Urmia, Sardasht, Meriwan, Kirmashan, and Ilam** — these birds have walked beside Kurdish shepherds, farmers, and children for longer than memory itself.

The **Kojî Kurdî**, the rooster, is proud and striking, standing tall with a gleaming red comb, bronze or emerald tail feathers, and sharp, alert eyes that miss nothing. He is the guardian of the yard, stepping with confidence across courtyards and fields. The **Mrîşkî Kurdî**, the hen, is softer in colour — brown, white, black, or speckled like the earth itself — with a gentle clucking voice and a calm, nurturing presence. Together they create the rhythm of Kurdish village life.

Before the sun rises, the rooster's powerful cry — **"Kukerîkûûû!"** — rolls across hills, valleys, orchards, and stone houses. It is a sound that has awakened Kurdish families

since ancient times, marking the beginning of work for farmers and the return of life to the quiet morning air. At noon and dusk he calls again, announcing the cycle of the day. The hen, meanwhile, speaks in softer tones — calming her chicks, calling them to food, murmuring gently as she lays her eggs.

These birds are true free-rangers of the mountains. They scratch the soil for seeds and insects, wander confidently through vineyards, wheat fields, orchards, and the stone courtyards of villages. They run swiftly from danger, teach their chicks the language of survival, and defend one another with remarkable courage. Kurdish roosters are famous for their bravery — many villagers tell stories of roosters fighting off snakes, stray cats, or birds of prey to protect the flock.

Strong and well-adapted, they grow naturally in the open air of the mountains. The hens lay up to **200 eggs a year**, small but rich in colour and flavour — a treasured part of Kurdish households. Chicks follow their mother closely along the edges of fields, learning the ancient pattern of foraging that has kept Kurdish chickens strong for generations. Their lives, often **six to ten years**, reflect a deep connection to the land, the seasons, and the people they live among.

Nest-building is simple and traditional: the hen tucks herself into barns, hay piles, stone walls, orchard corners, or beneath porches and trees. She lays **ten to fourteen eggs**, sitting with patience for three weeks as the rooster watches over her from nearby ground. When the chicks hatch, they gather beneath her wings like a living circle of warmth.
In this small family structure, many Kurds see the shape of their own ancestral values: protection, cooperation, and devotion.

The Mrîşkî Kurdî and Kojî Kurdî hold an honoured place in Kurdish stories, songs, and daily life. The rooster is the herald of dawn — the one who pushes darkness aside and awakens the village. The hen is the symbol of motherly wisdom, teaching her children through small gestures, gentle warnings, and the warmth of her wings. Together they represent livelihood, blessing, courage, and the peaceful identity of rural Kurdish life.

Today, however, these ancient birds face challenges.
Imported industrial breeds are replacing traditional Kurdish varieties.
Villages give way to cities.
Concrete replaces courtyards.
Factory farming weakens old bloodlines.
And yet, in places like **Garmian, Amedi, Hawraman, Van, Afrin, and Mahabad**, the true Kurdish hen and rooster still walk proudly across fields and stone paths, unchanged in spirit.

They remain living symbols of the mountains —
the memory of the land,
the guardians of every Kurdish dawn,
the humble heartbeats of village life.

*At dawn his voice awakens the hills,*
*her wings warm the earth below.*
*Together they keep the heartbeat of the village —*
*Mrîşkî Kurdî and Kojî Kurdî,*
*guardians of every Kurdish dawn.*

## 🦃 1.83- Keljik / Kelîk / Qel (قەل / کەلیک / كەلجك) — Kurdish Gobble bird (*Meleagris gallopavo domesticus*)

**Kelîk — The Proud Bird of Kurdish Villages**

The **Keljik**, or **Kelîk**, is one of the proudest and most striking birds that share life with Kurdish villages and farmyards. Though its ancient ancestors came from the wild forests of the Americas, this noble bird has lived in Kurdistan for many generations, becoming a familiar presence in mountain farms, orchards, and wide courtyard spaces. Today it thrives across **Bashur**, from **Hewlêr, Duhok, Soran, Ranya, Qaladze, Halabja, Garmian, Koya** and **Kalar** to **Chamchamal**; across **Rojava**, from **Qamishlo, Hesekê, Derik, Afrin, Kobanê**; across **Rojhilat**, including **Mahabad, Sardasht, Bokan, Urmia, Kirmashan, Ilam**; and throughout **Bakur**, in **Amed, Wan, Hakkari, Şirnex** and the wide lands of **Botan** and **Colemêrg**. Wherever Kurdish people work the land, the Kelîk walks nearby — a bird of abundance, strength, and tradition.

A full-grown male, the **Kelîkê Mezin**, is an unforgettable sight. Standing proudly like a king of the courtyard, he stretches almost a meter in length and carries a wingspan approaching **160 cm**. His feathers shimmer with bronze, green, purple, and rich brown — colours that glow like hammered metal under the sun. When he raises his broad fan-shaped tail, the farmyard seems to fill with movement and pride. The female, the **Kelîkê Jin**, is smaller and quieter, beautifully camouflaged in soft browns that allow her to hide safely among bushes and stones while nesting. Her gentleness hides a fierce devotion to her chicks.

One of the unique features of the Kelîk is its **red fleshy head ornaments** — the wattle and snood. These change colour with emotion: pale when calm, deep crimson when excited, angry, or courting. Kurdish children often laugh at this dramatic transformation, seeing it as the Kelîk's way of speaking without words.

At dawn, when roosters crow their first sharp greetings, the Kelîkê Mezin answers with a deeper, prouder voice — a booming **"gobble-gobble-gobble!"** that rolls across

orchards, wheat fields, stone houses, and mountain air. In Kurdish villages, this call is as familiar as the smell of bread ovens and the sound of shepherds preparing for the day. During courtship, the male performs a display so beautiful that children gather to watch: tail fanned wide, wings lowered, feathers puffed, he walks in slow, majestic circles, his chest vibrating with soft drumming that echoes through the courtyard.

Kurdish Gobble bird live semi-wild, roaming freely through orchards, vineyards, wheat fields, terraces, and garden walls. They feed on grains, seeds, insects, worms, wild herbs, berries, and fallen fruit — a natural diet that makes them hardy and perfectly adapted to the climates of Kurdistan, from the cold mountain valleys of **Hakkari** to the warm plains of **Rojava**. Often the Kelîkê Mezin climbs a stone wall and stands like a guardian, scanning the distance for foxes, hawks, or stray dogs. His watchful posture has protected Kurdish farmyards for generations.

In spring, the Kelîkê Jin builds her nest in secret — under bushes, behind stone fences, or in the roots of old trees. She lays **eight to fifteen** creamy eggs, speckled like mountain pebbles. After four weeks, tiny fluffy chicks hatch and follow their mother everywhere, a moving cluster of soft yellow life. The Kelîkê Mezin is a surprisingly brave protector. Many villagers tell stories of a male turkey driving off foxes or wild dogs with loud shouts and fierce displays, refusing to surrender his family. These birds can live **eight to ten years**, sometimes longer on quiet mountain farms where danger is rare.

In Kurdish rural tradition, the Kelîk holds a special place. It represents **prosperity, protection, strength, honour, and unity of the home**. When a Kelîk stands tall in the courtyard, villagers believe the household is strong and watched over. An old saying goes:

**“Keljik li malê tirsa şêr e.”**
*“The Gobble bird at home fears nothing — not even a lion.”*

During Sersal and weddings, the Kelîk has long been part of celebration meals, but many families keep them simply for their beauty, pride, and loyalty to the farm. Children

love them; guests admire them; and farmers appreciate their natural role as insect-cleaners and guardians.

In Kurdish folklore, the Kelîk appears as the protector of the farm, the proud keeper of the morning, the symbol of a home that stands firm through hardship. People say: **“Where the Kelîk stands tall, the home is strong.”**

*Bronze wings gleam beneath the sun,*
*your proud call stirs the valley air —*
*guardian of the courtyard,*
*Kelîk, noble bird of Kurdistan.*

## 🌙 1.84- Şemşemê Kwere (شەمشەمێ کوێرە / شەمشەمە کوێرە) — European Nightjar (Caprimulgus europaeus)

**Şemşemê Kwere — The Nightjar of Kurdistan**

The **Şemşemê Kwere**, one of the most mysterious night birds of Kurdistan, is a creature woven from dusk itself. It lives quietly among the open woodlands, rocky hillsides, orchards, and semi-desert plains of the Kurdish homeland, from the high mountains of **Hawraman, Şaho, Qandil, Amedi**, and **Soran**, to the dry plains of **Kirkuk, Garmian, Halabja, Koya, Shahrazur**, and the warm valleys of **Rojava** — Afrin, Kobanê, Qamishlo, Hesekê.
It follows the broken stone landscapes of **Amed, Botan, Mêrdîn, Hakkarî, Wan, Mahabad, Urmia, Kirmashan, Ilam, Luristan**, and wanders into the semi-deserts of **Şengal (Sinjar), Tal Afar, and Rabia**.
Wherever twilight deepens, this bird belongs.

Small and slender, only **26–28 cm** long with wide, soft wings, the Şemşemê Kwere disappears completely by day. Its feathers — a mosaic of brown, grey, and black — imitate the colours of dust, bark, and stone so perfectly that even a shepherd passing inches away may see nothing. It crouches motionless on the ground or a low branch, part of the land itself.
But when the sun dies behind the mountains, it awakens silently, lifting into the evening air like a spirit.

Its voice is one of the most enchanting sounds in Kurdish nature — a long, rolling call, **“churr-churr-churr…”**, vibrating softly across the warm night. In many villages, this sound is the music of summer, echoing across orchards and plains until it feels as if the land itself is breathing. Some elders once believed the Şemşemê Kwere carried moonlight in its wings, guiding shepherds home at dusk or keeping lonely travellers company in the silence.

The bird hunts in perfect silence, gliding low between thorn bushes, orchards, rocks, and wheat fields. Its wide mouth and bristled feathers are designed to catch insects mid-air — moths, beetles, and night-flying creatures that sparkle faintly in moonlight. Its eyes shine red or amber under the moon, giving it a mysterious presence that has inspired countless village stories.

When the Kurdistan spring grows warm, the Şemşemê Kwere begins to nest. It builds no traditional nest; instead, it lays **two pale, speckled eggs** directly on the ground, trusting its camouflage more than any construction. The eggs blend so perfectly with pebbles and leaves that even experienced shepherds walking nearby rarely notice them. Both parents feed their chicks at night, and the young, covered in soft down, can walk almost as soon as they hatch.
These birds live around **10–12 years**, wandering the same familiar hills year after year.

The Şemşemê Kwere is a long-distance traveller, arriving in Kurdistan in **April and May**, staying through the warm summer nights, and then departing in autumn toward Africa. During migration it follows the river valleys of **Great Zab, Little Zab,**

and the plains shaped by the **Tigris** — ancient routes older than memory itself. It also moves through wetlands near **Urmia**, where insects gather in great clouds at sunset.

For Kurdish villagers, this bird has always held a special meaning. Its steady night call announces the arrival of warm evenings, the turning of seasons, and the comfort of summer nights. Some say it guides travellers across moonlit hills; others believe it protects orchards by eating the insects that threaten crops. It is a quiet guardian of twilight — a companion to shepherds resting on high slopes, to farmers working late in the fields, and to children lying awake on rooftops in the heat of summer.

Yet even this ancient bird faces dangers.
The spread of concrete buildings destroys the open land it needs.
Pesticides kill the insects it depends on.
Night lights confuse its hunting, and fast vehicles disturb its silence.
Fires and war damage remove the natural cover where it nests.

But in the serene hills of **Amedi, Hawraman, Şaho, Botan, Sinjar, Rojava**, and **Kirmashan**, its voice still rises — the eternal **“churr”** that drifts through the warm dusk like the breath of the land itself.

*Between light and shadow you sing,*
*voice of the twilight wind —*
*unseen but ever near,*
*keeper of the fading sun.*

## 1.85- Çwelekeî Befre / Çwelekê Befre / Tirînî Befre

## (چوێلەکەی بەفرە / چوێلەکە بەفرە / تیرینی بەفرە) — Snowfinch (Montifringilla nivalis)

**The Little Bird of Snow and Sky**

The **Çwelekeî Befre**, the Snowfinch of Kurdistan, is one of the most extraordinary creatures of the Kurdish highlands — a small, bright messenger of life that survives where almost nothing else can. Its Kurdish name simply means "the little bird," yet it thrives in places where even eagles hesitate to fly, living in the thin, frozen air of **2,000 to 3,500-meter** mountain summits.

Measuring only **15–17 cm**, with soft grey feathers, white patches along its wings, and black-and-white flashes that glitter like snow crystals in sunlight, it brings a quiet beauty to the highest points of the Kurdish mountains. In summer, its bill turns yellow; in winter, black — a tiny adaptation to changing diets and seasons, a reminder of how closely this bird is tied to the rhythm of the mountains.

The Snowfinch is a true child of the highlands, found in the coldest and most rugged parts of Kurdistan. It flutters above the volcanic cones of **Agirî (Ararat)** and **Tendürek**, dances over the wind-carved cliffs of **Colemêrg (Hakkarî)** and **Wan**, and circles the lonely ridges of **Şırnak** and **Botan**. In Rojhilat, it lives among the towering **Zagros peaks**, the icy slopes of **Sahand** and **Sabalan**, the highlands around **Sine (Sanandaj)** and **Kirmashan**, and the sacred summits of **Shaho** and **Hawraman**. In Bashur, it greets the sunrise over **Qandil, Halgurd, Sakran, Bradost, Barzan, Soran, Choman**, and the cliffs of **Rawanduz**.

Wherever the world turns white, the Çwelekeî Befre is at home — hopping lightly across snowfields, searching for alpine seeds, grass tips, and tiny high-altitude insects. Its delicate call, **"tsee-tsee-tsee,"** carries far through the thin winter air. It rarely

descends below the tree line, choosing instead the silence of snow, ice, and sky — a land where storms leave no footprints, and the world feels untouched.

When the first warmth of May begins to melt the edges of the snow, the Snowfinch starts its family. It builds a soft, hidden nest of moss, wool, and grass inside small cracks in stone walls, boulder holes, cliff crevices, or even old shepherd shelters. The female lays **four or five** white eggs, and both parents warm and protect the chicks, pressing their tiny bodies against the cold wind until the little ones are strong enough to face the mountain air on their own.

In Kurdish folklore, the Çwelekeî Befre is known as **the spirit of the mountains** — a guardian of purity and solitude. Shepherds say:
**“Where the Snowfinch sings, the mountain breathes.”**
To see it is to feel the highland’s quiet heart: endurance, serenity, and the gentle freedom of open sky. Kurdish poets describe it as the creature that brings life to snow, whispering to the mountains that even in the coldest silence, something small and brave still sings.

Though still found in healthy numbers on Kurdistan’s highest peaks, the Snowfinch now faces threats from climate change, shrinking snowfields, disappearing glaciers, and human disturbance in alpine valleys. Protecting the summits of **Halgurd–Sakran, Qandil, Ararat/Agirî**, and the high Zagros is essential if this little spirit of the mountains is to survive.

*Above the last line of trees,*
*where silence meets the wind,*
*a small heart beats in snow —*
*the voice of the mountain’s soul.*

## 🕊️ 1.86- Reflection – The Voice of the Sky

(دەنگی ئاسمان – The Eternal Wings of Kurdistan)

Beneath the vast skies of Kurdistan, where mountains rise like prayers and valleys rest in silence, the birds of this land move as living songs of freedom.
They are the breath between earth and heaven, the wandering souls of light that bind the sky to the soil. From the golden eagle upon the cliffs to the lark above the meadows, from the partridge calling at dawn to the stork crossing the rivers of spring — each carries a note of the music that has echoed here since the beginning of time.

Their wings are the messengers of memory. They carry the stories of seasons — the snow that melts into rivers, the winds that return with the rains, the warmth that awakens the blossoms.
When they rise, they lift the spirit of the land; when they fall silent, the sky feels emptier, as though a piece of Kurdistan's soul has gone to rest.

They have watched empires rise and fall, watched shepherds, caravans, and wanderers pass beneath them, and yet they remain — faithful witnesses of the eternal.
Their flight knows no borders, for they are the free citizens of creation. They do not ask who rules the land below; they only sing for the mountains that hold their nests and the valleys that echo their songs.

Many voices have faded — the bustard that once danced across the plains, the cranes that filled the twilight with song — yet their memories linger in the wind, soft and sacred, like blessings whispered from another age.
And still, others endure: the eagle's cry over Qandil, the nightjar's hum by the rivers, the swallow's return each spring. They remind us that life, though fragile, never truly ends — it only changes form and finds another sky.

To know Kurdistan is to know its birds — not as ornaments of the air, but as guardians of meaning.
Each wingbeat is a heartbeat of the wind, each song a thread in the great fabric of life.

When we hear them above us — circling, calling, soaring — we should listen not only with our ears but with our hearts.

For they whisper, as the dawn breaks and the mountains glow in gold:
“We are the voice of the sky, the breath of freedom, the memory of the land.
Protect us, and you protect your own song.”

# 🐾 Section 2 – Mammals of Kurdistan

**(Ajlên Şîrder / ئاژەڵانی شێردەر)**

## Silent Wanderers of the Mountains — Strength, Spirit, and Survival

If the birds are the songs of Kurdistan, then its mammals are the pulse that sustains its living landscape. From the shaded oak forests to the high plateaus of Hawraman and the rugged summits of the Zagros, these animals embody endurance, resilience, and a profound harmony with the land. Their paths follow those once travelled by shepherds, hunters, and nomads, echoing the rhythm of a people shaped by mountain life — proud, patient, and untamed.

Among the most remarkable of these creatures is the **Kurdistan leopard (Pêlî Asmanî Kurdistanê)** — a rare, powerful sentinel of the highlands. Moving silently across the cliffs of Shaho, Shirin, and Qandil, its golden coat, adorned with dark rosettes, blends seamlessly with the shadowed rocks it calls home. In Kurdish imagination, this leopard transcends mere animal existence; it is a living emblem of strength, solitude, and resistance — the wild soul of the mountains that endures against all odds.

In earlier centuries, another great predator roamed these same ranges — the **legendary Zagros tiger**, known in Kurdish oral tradition as *Pilenga Tînu* ("The Thirsty Tiger of Zagros"). Once inhabiting the dense forests and valleys of Hakkari, Agri, Lurestan, Ilam, and Khuzestan, it was both feared and revered. Though now presumed extinct, the tiger survives in folklore and poetry as a symbol of lost majesty and the indomitable power of nature. In the collective memory of the Kurdish people, its golden stripes still flash across the reeds of ancient rivers — a haunting echo of a time when Kurdistan's wilderness stretched vast and unbroken.

Across the valleys, **wolves (gurê)** roam under the moonlight — intelligent, loyal, and fierce. The wolf occupies a sacred place in Kurdish mythology, representing unity,

courage, and honour. Its distant call through the snow-clad hills awakens both awe and kinship, a reminder of the shared instinct for survival that binds all living beings.

The **brown bear of the Zagros**, mighty yet gentle, embodies the balance between strength and peace. Spending the warmer months gathering berries, honey, and roots, it seldom poses harm to those who respect its space. To many Kurdish villagers, the bear is regarded as the *elder of the forest* — slow, wise, and attuned to the rhythm of the earth.

Graceful **wild goats (ibex)** and **deer** leap across cliffs and ravines with astonishing agility, representing purity and beauty in Kurdish folklore. They are often portrayed as companions of mountain spirits or as symbols of love in folk songs. The *Marazî Kew* — a mythical white goat said to appear only at dawn — remains a cherished sign of fortune to those who glimpse it in the highlands.

In the southern plains and steppe regions, **gazelles** sprint like the wind, their fragile grace contrasting with the fierce determination of the **wild boar (Berazî Çiya)** charging through thickets. Each creature reveals a different aspect of nature — delicacy and defiance, elegance and endurance — together maintaining the delicate balance of Kurdistan's ecosystems.

Smaller yet vital are the **foxes, lynxes, badgers, hares, and hedgehogs** that roam the hills and forests. The **red fox**, ever watchful and resourceful, is a frequent figure in Kurdish tales told by lamplight, teaching the virtues of wit, caution, and patience. These modest creatures serve as the unseen custodians of the soil, quietly preserving the life of the land.

No account of Kurdistan's fauna would be complete without mention of the **domesticated sheep and goats**, companions of humankind since the earliest pastoral tribes. Their bells still echo through the valleys as shepherds migrate between summer and winter pastures. For countless generations, these animals have nourished Kurdish families with food, wool, and song — a living bond between humanity and the wild that sustains it.

The mammals of Kurdistan are not mere remnants of a fading wilderness; they are living symbols of endurance and identity. Their tracks intersect forgotten caravan paths and the ruins of ancient kingdoms. To safeguard them is to protect memory itself — to honour the land that has given us both shelter and soul.

They remind us that freedom — like the leopard's leap or the wolf's cry — is an instinct shared by all beings: to live with dignity, to move with courage, and to remain forever bound to the mountains of home.

## 🐆 2.1- Pêlî Kurdistan / Pêlî Zagros (پەڵی کوردستان / پەڵی زاگرۆس) — The Kurdistan Leopard / Zagros Leopard (Panthera pardus tulliana)

Majestic, solitary, and almost invisible, the **Pêlî Kurdistan** — the Kurdistan or Zagros Leopard — is the most powerful predator still roaming the highlands of Kurdistan. It moves like mist between oak forests, cliffs, and rocky ravines, unseen but always present, its golden eyes watching from ancient shadows. Once widespread across the entire **Zagros and Taurus mountain belts**, this magnificent cat is now among the rarest mammals on earth — a living ghost of a wilder age that refuses to disappear.

A fully grown male may reach **120–150 cm in body length**, with a **tail of 70–90 cm**, and weigh up to **90 kilograms**. Its coat is pale gold or sand-coloured, marked with dark rosettes that soften as the altitude rises. In winter, the fur thickens and turns silver-grey, allowing the leopard to vanish into snow and stone as if the mountains themselves had shaped its body.

The Pêlî Kurdistan roams the rugged ranges from **Hawraman and Shaho** in the north, through **Qandil, Bradost, Sirwan Valley**, and all the way to **Ilam, Khanaqin**, and the **Luristan–Zagros borderlands** in the south. It favours remote wilderness — cliffs, caves, oak forests, deep canyons — places where human footsteps fade and nature still breathes without fear. Here it hunts wild goats, ibex, deer, wild boar, hares, and smaller mammals, moving silently and with calculated precision. Every step is deliberate, every hunt a dance between patience and power. When resting, it hides in rocky dens or beneath overhangs near water, listening to the heartbeat of its mountains.

The leopard is a creature of solitude. It walks alone, meets only to mate, and marks its territory with scent and claw marks — a quiet declaration of sovereignty. Breeding may occur in any season, though most cubs are born in late winter after nearly **100 days of gestation**. The mother gives birth to **two or three cubs** in a hidden cave, guarding them fiercely. Blind at birth, the cubs stay close to her for almost two years, learning to stalk,

climb, and survive in a world where only the strong endure. When they disperse at two years old to claim their own territories, each young leopard continues a silent journey that countless generations have taken before them.

In Kurdish tradition, the Pêlî Kurdistan is both feared and revered. The word **pêlî**, "the spotted one," carries meanings of mystery, beauty, and untamed strength. To see one in the wild was once considered a blessing — a sign of divine presence, courage, or ancestral protection. Kurdish warriors were honoured with the name **pêlî-çiya**, "the leopard of the mountain," celebrating their agility, bravery, and independence. An old saying teaches:

**"Pêlî li ser çiyayê xwe şêr e."**
*A leopard on its own mountain is a lion.*

It reflects a deep truth of Kurdish culture: real strength comes not from domination, but from belonging — a wild power grounded in the land that shaped it.

Today, the Pêlî Kurdistan stands at the edge of survival. Fewer than a thousand remain across its entire range, with isolated pockets surviving in the **Zagros of Rojhilat**, the **Qandil–Hakkarî borderlands**, **Shaho**, **Hawraman**, and the remote valleys of **Sirwan**. Habitat destruction, illegal hunting, poisoned prey, and the decline of ibex and boar have pushed this ancient predator toward disappearance. And yet, herders still whisper stories of rare sightings — a shadow crossing a ridge at dusk, a paw print in fresh snow near Qandil, a pair of glowing eyes reflecting moonlight above Hawraman. These stories remind us that the spirit of the mountains has not yet faded.

Across Kurdish lands, conservation efforts grow stronger: education in villages, anti-poaching patrols, wildlife corridors, and research teams working across borders. For many Kurds, the Pêlî Kurdistan is more than an animal. It is a **national emblem of survival, dignity, and the untamed soul of the homeland** — a symbol of a people who, like the leopard, endure against all odds.

*Shadow of gold and silence,*
*you walk where even the wind kneels.*

*The mountain keeps your secret,*

*and the night carries your name —*

**Pêlî… Kurdistan.**

## 🐅 2.2- Pilînga Zagrosê / Pilînga Tînu (پڵینگی زاگرۆس / پڵینگی تینوو) — The Zagros Tiger / The Lost Tiger of Kurdistan (Panthera tigris virgata)

Once, the roar of the **Pilînga Zagrosê** — the Zagros Tiger — rolled through the valleys of **Lorestan, Ilam, Hawraman**, and the lower reaches of the Zagros Mountains. It was the fire-heart of the forests, a golden storm that moved between reeds and rivers, feared and honoured in equal measure. Today, the tiger lives only in memory and story, yet its spirit burns fiercely in the imagination of Kurdistan — fierce, noble, and eternally free.

The Zagros Tiger was smaller than the great Bengal tiger of India, yet every bit as magnificent. Its coat glowed a deep, living orange; its underbelly was pale as river sand; and its narrow dark stripes curved like flowing water down its sides. Its shoulders were powerful, its neck thick, its muscles shaped by mountains and riverbeds. And its amber eyes — bright as burning honey — could freeze the breath of anyone who met its gaze. Villagers called it **Pilînga Zagrosê**, the "Lion of the Mountains," for its unmatched strength and royal presence.

Long ago, this tiger roamed the forested valleys and reed-filled plains along the foothills of the Zagros — places where the **Karun, Sirwan, and Little Zab** rivers twist through oak forests and marshland. It hunted wild boar, deer, and gazelle, gliding low through thick reeds at dusk like living fire. Sometimes its tracks appeared near villages where goats grazed, but the tiger avoided humans whenever possible, keeping to the ancient paths of its ancestors. It was a creature of both river and mountain, equally graceful in water and on stone — swimming through reeds, climbing cliffs, and moving with silent authority.

In winter, when snow covered the Zagros, its orange coat flashed through the white world like a flame against cold stone. Even then, its presence was known more by signs than by sight: a half-melted paw print by the riverbank, the sudden silence of birds, or the uneasy cry of a goat far up a slope. The tiger was there — unseen, but never absent.

Little is recorded of its breeding in Kurdistan, for by the time scientists showed interest, the Pilînga Zagrosê was already vanishing. But like all tigers, the females likely carried their young for about a hundred days before giving birth to **two to four cubs** in hidden caves or reed beds near water. The mother hunted tirelessly, bringing meat for her helpless cubs and defending them with a ferocity unmatched in nature. Cubs remained at her side for nearly two years before wandering off to seek their own territory. The male tiger lingered at the edges of this world — silent, watchful, guarding the land but keeping his distance from the mother and her young.

In Kurdish tradition, the Pilînga Zagrosê is a creature painted with reverence, fear, and deep sorrow — the **Lost King of the Mountains**. Old hunters spoke of it in whispers, claiming its spirit still walks the forests, invisible to all but those with brave hearts. Its name became a title of honour for warriors, poets, and leaders whose courage could not be broken. Some villages said that its roar brought thunder, and that when the tiger died, a terrible silence fell upon the land. Its striped fur was believed to carry protective power; a single hair was kept as a talisman against fear.

The last confirmed sighting of the Zagros Tiger was in the mid-20th century, near the foothills of **Khuzestan and Ilam**, where hunting, loss of prey, and destruction of wetlands finally pushed this noble creature into extinction. Yet in Kurdish storytelling it never vanished. It simply crossed into another world — becoming a guardian spirit of mountains and rivers, a symbol of what was lost and what must be protected.

Today, Kurdish conservationists dream of restoring tigers to parts of Kurdistan where the land may once again sustain them — perhaps along the marshes of the Sirwan River or the deep oak forests of Lorestan. Whether this dream becomes reality or remains legend, the Pilînga Zagrosê continues to walk beside the Kurdish people in memory, poetry, and the echo of old songs.

*O lost flame of the mountains,*
*your roar still rolls through the stones.*
*The river remembers your reflection,*

*and the wind still carries your name —*

**Pilînga Zagrosê.**

## 🐈 2.3- Şêrê Biçûk / Pişîle Şêrî / Şêrî Çuke / Pişîle Zinarî

## (شێرێ بچووک / شێری چوکە / پشیلەی شێری / پشیلە زینارى) — The Caracal / The Desert Lynx of Kurdistan / The Little Lion of Kurdistan (Caracal caracal)

Elegant, silent, and fierce, the **Şêrê Biçûk** — “the little lion” in Kurdish — is one of Kurdistan’s most mysterious wild cats. Known to science as the **Caracal**, this graceful predator roams the dry plains and rocky foothills of the Zagros, slipping between shadow and stone with the poise of a dancer and the precision of a hunter born from wind.

Its Kurdish name reflects its spirit — small in size, vast in power. The scientific name points to its striking black ear tufts, long and sharp, rising like spears of shadow above its golden head. Those ears hear what no other creature can: the sound of wings in darkness, the tremble of a stone under a mouse’s foot, the shift of wind across the hills.

The Şêrê Biçûk stands 40–50 cm tall and weighs 8–20 kilograms. Its coat is smooth, short, and golden-tan with a pale underside, perfectly blending into the Kurdish steppe. Its eyes shine pale green or amber, full of alertness — as if always listening to the earth.

This silent hunter once ranged widely across **Southern and Eastern Kurdistan** — confirmed in **Ilam, Mehran, Dehloran, Badreh, Khanaqin, Kifri, Mandali, Sirwan Basin, Hawraman**, and reported in drier foothills near **Shaho, Qasr-e Shirin**, and the lowland belts linking **Kermashan to Lorestan**. In the western stretches of Kurdistan, its presence was noted historically in northern **Rojava** near dry valleys around **Serekaniyê, Tirbespî, and Derik**, though it survived longer in the semi-desert regions touching Khuzestan.

The Caracal prefers open semi-desert valleys, oak foothills, and rocky slopes where grassland meets stone. Here it hunts hares, partridges, gerbils, sand-dwellers, and even small gazelles. It moves silently across the ground, whisper-light, its paws leaving

barely a trace. With astonishing agility, it can leap more than three meters straight into the air to catch birds mid-flight — a feat that earned it the name “the sky-hunter” among old shepherds.

During the heat of the day, it rests under rocks or shrubs. It emerges only at dusk and dawn, sliding through shadows, a streak of gold and black.

Breeding occurs mainly in late winter or spring. After 78–80 days, the female gives birth to 2–3 kittens in a hidden den — a cave, a rock hollow, or the embrace of dense shrubs. The kittens are born with small ear tufts visible, their eyes closed tight against the world. By two weeks, they begin exploring; by three months, they follow their mother on short hunts. The female is a fierce teacher, showing her cubs how to stalk, leap, and disappear. Males do not help raise the young, but the mother’s devotion is legendary.

In Kurdish folklore, the **Şêrê Biçûk** symbolizes grace, stealth, and sacred alertness — a creature that *“sees before others see.”*
Herders once said:
**“Şêrê biçûk tuşî xewnê na dibe.”**
*“The little lion never sleeps unguarded.”*
Old mountain tales speak of a silent cat that guarded springs and sacred trees, a messenger between the seen and unseen. Its presence near a village was believed to bring good fortune to shepherds who respected nature. In poetry, it appears as the cat of wind and gold — a creature woven from shadow and fire.

Today, the Şêrê Biçûk is rare and locally endangered in Kurdistan. Habitat loss, overhunting, and shrinking prey populations have driven it into remoter areas. Yet confirmed sightings in **Hawraman, Ilam, Shaho**, and near the borderlands of **Khanaqin and Badreh** prove that this elusive cat still survives — quiet, unbroken, and enduring.

Its protection depends on preserving the oak forest edges, dry valleys, and open plains that once sustained its world. Where the Caracal survives, the land is still healthy — a place where wilderness breathes between rock and thorn.

Eyes of dawn,

paws of silence —

you pass like a whisper through the heat,

a flame that leaves no ash.

## 🐈‍⬛ 2.4- Pişîleî Çiyayî / Pişîlei Şaxî / Pişîleî Zagrosê

## (پشیلەی چیایی / پشیلە شاخی / پشیلەی زاگرۆس) — The Eurasian Lynx / The Mountain Lynx of Kurdistan (Lynx lynx)

Mysterious and proud, **Pişîleî Çiyayî** is the great cat of Kurdistan's high forests — the silent watcher of cliffs and ridges. With its black-tufted ears and golden-spotted coat, it walks like a spirit of the mountains, seen only by those the land chooses. Among the rocks and oak woods of **Shaho, Hawraman, Bradost, Barzan, Qandil**, and the upper Zagros, it rules as both hunter and guardian.
Across the colder ranges of **Hakkarî, Şirnex, Botan, Wan, Agirî, Dersim, Bingol, Qers**, and the forested belts of **Merîwan, Paveh, Sine, Kirmashan, Ilam, Lorestan**, and even the remote ridges around **Urmia, Mahabad, Piranshar, Afrin, and Derik**, this elusive cat still leaves its dust-soft footprints on wilderness paths.

The lynx is a medium-large wild cat, standing 55–70 cm at the shoulder and weighing up to 30 kilograms in males. Its coat glows with shades of sand, gold, and winter grey; its short black-tipped tail shifts like a signal of hidden emotion. But it is the eyes — wide, amber, reflecting the faintest light — that define it. Kurdish herders say the lynx "sees truth in darkness," for nothing escapes its silent gaze.

It hunts alone, ambushing wild goats, hares, partridges, and even foxes. Every step is deliberate, every leap a whisper. Rarely does it roar or snarl; its strength lies in patience, clarity, and silence — the virtues of the mountains themselves.

Pişîleî Çiyayî inhabits high forests and rocky slopes between 1,000–3,000 metres. It chooses solitude, avoiding human paths, resting at midday in shaded crevices, thorn thickets, or beneath junipers. By night, it glides between oak trunks with ghostly elegance, leaving almost no sound or scent behind. In winter, when snow buries the highlands, its large paws act like natural snowshoes, letting it move freely across white landscapes where even wolves struggle.

Mating occurs from February to April. After about 70 days, the mother gives birth to 2–4 kittens in a hidden den lined with moss, fur, and dry leaves. For the first month, she guards them fiercely, feeding them with careful kills. As the cubs grow, she teaches them to stalk, climb, listen, and disappear — passing on the ancient code of mountain survival.

In Kurdish folklore, the lynx is a creature of vision and wisdom. Old hunters said:
**“Pişel dil û sêwî dide.”**
*“The lynx sees both heart and shadow.”*
It was believed to protect sacred springs and lost travellers, a shy guardian of purity. To glimpse one was a blessing; to harm one was a curse upon the valley.

But Pişîleî Çiyayî is now one of Kurdistan’s most endangered creatures. Habitat loss, deforestation, decline of prey, and illegal hunting have driven it to the edge. Protecting the lynx means protecting the balance, silence, and dignity of the mountain forests themselves — the breath of the land.

Eyes of dawn,
steps of silence —
you walk the path between shadow and sun,
and the mountain keeps your secret.

## 🐈 2.5- Pişîle Kêwî (پشیلە کێوی) — The Kurdish Wildcat / The Wild Cat of Kurdistan (Felis silvestris lybica / Felis silvestris silvestris)

In the low hills and valleys where oak meets stone, another wild cat roams — smaller, quieter, but equally proud.
**Pişîle Kêwî**, the Kurdish Wildcat, is the shadow of the evening: the silent hunter of orchards, rock terraces, and wheat fields. It walks close to human lands yet belongs entirely to the wild.

This elusive cat lives across the rugged and fertile landscapes of Kurdistan — from the oak valleys of **Shaho, Hawraman, Merîwan, Paveh, Penjwen, and Ranya** to the high pastures of **Amedi, Duhok, Bradost, Barzan, Qandil**, and the dry plains of **Garmian, Kifri, Kirkuk, and Hewlêr**.
In the north it roams the forests of **Hakkarî, Şirnex, Amed, Botan, Wan, Agirî, Dersim, Bingol, and Qers**, while in the east and west it survives around **Mahabad, Urmia, Piranshar, Ilam, Kirmashan, Lorestan, Afrin, Derik, Qamislo, and Hesekê**.

Unlike the lynx, this cat is small and agile — about the size of a large domestic cat. Adults weigh 5–7 kilograms and stand 25–30 cm at the shoulder. Its coat is ash-grey with faint stripes, and its thick, ringed tail ends in a bold black tip — a mark that separates it from all tame cats.

Its eyes — bright gold or green — shine with caution and wild intelligence. It moves with the elegance of wind slipping through grass, always listening, always reading the land.

The Pişîle Kêwî inhabits rocky slopes, farmland edges, river valleys, shrublands, and olive groves. Nocturnal and secretive, it hunts rodents, birds, lizards, insects, and sometimes young snakes. It climbs easily, leaps between stones, and sees in the dark as if guided by an inner flame.

Though small, it is fierce. When cornered, it arches its back, flares its fur, and hisses with the fire of a creature who refuses to be tamed.

Breeding begins in early spring. After about 65 days, the mother gives birth to 2–5 kittens in a hollow tree, a stone crevice, or an abandoned burrow. She raises them alone, teaching them through play — pouncing, chasing, hiding — until summer when they attempt their first hunts, ears twitching with excitement and fear. Some remain within her territory; others wander far, seeking new land and new silence.

In Kurdish village lore, the Pişîle Kêwî is both helper and symbol. Farmers call it the "guardian of granaries," for it keeps mice from stored grain. Travellers believe a wildcat crossing the path at dusk protects them from snakes and wandering spirits. To call someone **Pişîle Kêwî** — "wildcat-hearted" — is to praise their independence, bravery, and refusal to be controlled.

Today, the true wildcat faces new dangers: hybridisation with domestic cats, shrinking habitats, and rising roads cutting across its silent world. Conservationists now study DNA and camera-trap footage to protect the last pure lines of this ancient Kurdish predator. Saving the wildcat is saving the wildness inside the land itself.

Small hunter of twilight,
your heart beats with the pulse of earth.
Even the wind steps lightly
when you pass.

## 🐈 2.6 – Pişîleî Malê ya Kurdistanê (پشیلەی ماڵی کوردستان) — The Kurdish Home Cat / Domestic Cat of Kurdistan- Felis catus

Among the warm courtyards, sunlit rooftops, stone stairways, and apricot gardens of Kurdistan lives another quiet guardian — gentle, clever, graceful, and woven into the daily rhythm of Kurdish life. This is **Pişîle Malê ya Kurdistanê**, the Kurdish Home Cat: the friend of children, the patient hunter of shadows, the night watcher on rooftops, and the silent keeper of grain and stories. Unlike the fierce mountain wildcats of Qandil and Bradost, the Kurdish home cat lives beside people, sharing warmth, food, and affection — yet in its eyes a spark of the ancient wild still glows, echoing its ancestors who once roamed freely between the Zagros and Taurus ranges long before villages and cities rose from the valleys.

These cats live in almost every part of Kurdistan, adapting with grace to each landscape. In **Bakur**, they wander through the streets and gardens of **Wan (Van), Hakkarî, Amed, Şirnex, Botan, Dersim, Bingol, and Qers**, curling up on rooftops warmed by the northern sun. In **Başûr**, they weave between the homes of **Duhok, Zakho, Amedi, Barzan, Qandil, Ranya, Slemani, Garmian, Kirkuk, and Hewlêr**, recognized by families for their colours and personalities. In **Rojhilat**, they walk the alleys of **Mahabad, Urmia, Piranshar, Bane, Merîwan, Paveh, Kirmashan, Ilam, and Lorestan**, slipping between gardens and bazaars. And in **Rojava**, they are part of daily life in **Afrin, Derik, Amûdê, Qamislo, and Hesekê**, guarding homes, grain, and children with their quiet presence. Every village has its favourite cat — often known by name, by colour, by behaviour, or by the stories people tell about it.

Among all Kurdish home cats, the most legendary is the **Pişîleî Wanê**, the Van Cat, born from the mountains and cold waters around Lake Wan. Its eyes are a gift of two worlds: one sky-blue, one amber, copper, or green — a beauty believed to come from the lake itself. Some families say, “One eye from the sky, one from the sun.” With its pure white fur and gentle nature, the Van Cat is a cultural treasure of Kurdistan — loyal,

calm, and often choosing one human as its lifelong companion. It swims, climbs, and watches the world with a quiet intelligence, carrying the mythic grace of its homeland.

In the high villages of **Amedi, Barzan, Bradost, Hawraman, Shaho, and Qandil**, another kind of cat roams — the **Pişîleî Çiyayê**, the Mountain Village Cat. Thick-furred and strong-legged, it leaps easily across stone walls and slopes, its tabby or grey coat blending with the mountains. It is a hunter of mice, lizards, and even small snakes, a silent protector of barns and rooftops. Independent by nature, it stays close to its chosen home but moves with the free spirit of the hills.

Then there is the **Pişîleî Gundî**, the Village Courtyard Cat, found in nearly every Kurdish village. It is friendly and playful, curling in warm spots and sleeping under grapevines, chasing insects in summer and sitting beside the tandoor oven in winter. Its colours vary — ginger, black, calico, white — and every child knows the cats that wander through barns and haystacks, keeping rodents away from grain. Finally, the **Pişîleî Şarê**, the City Cat, rules the streets of Slemani, Hewlêr, Duhok, Amed, and Qamishlo — slim, fast, clever, and endlessly adaptable. These cats know every alley, every bakery, every rooftop, living with the confidence of true survivors.

Kurdish home cats breed several times a year, their litters often born in warm corners of rooftops or in quiet garden sheds. Kittens open their eyes after the first week, stumbling through their new world while their mother guards them fiercely. By two months they begin their first lessons in hunting; by four to six months they form lifelong bonds with the humans around them. The birth of a Van kitten whose eyes begin to turn two different colours is a moment of joy for families — a small miracle of the house.

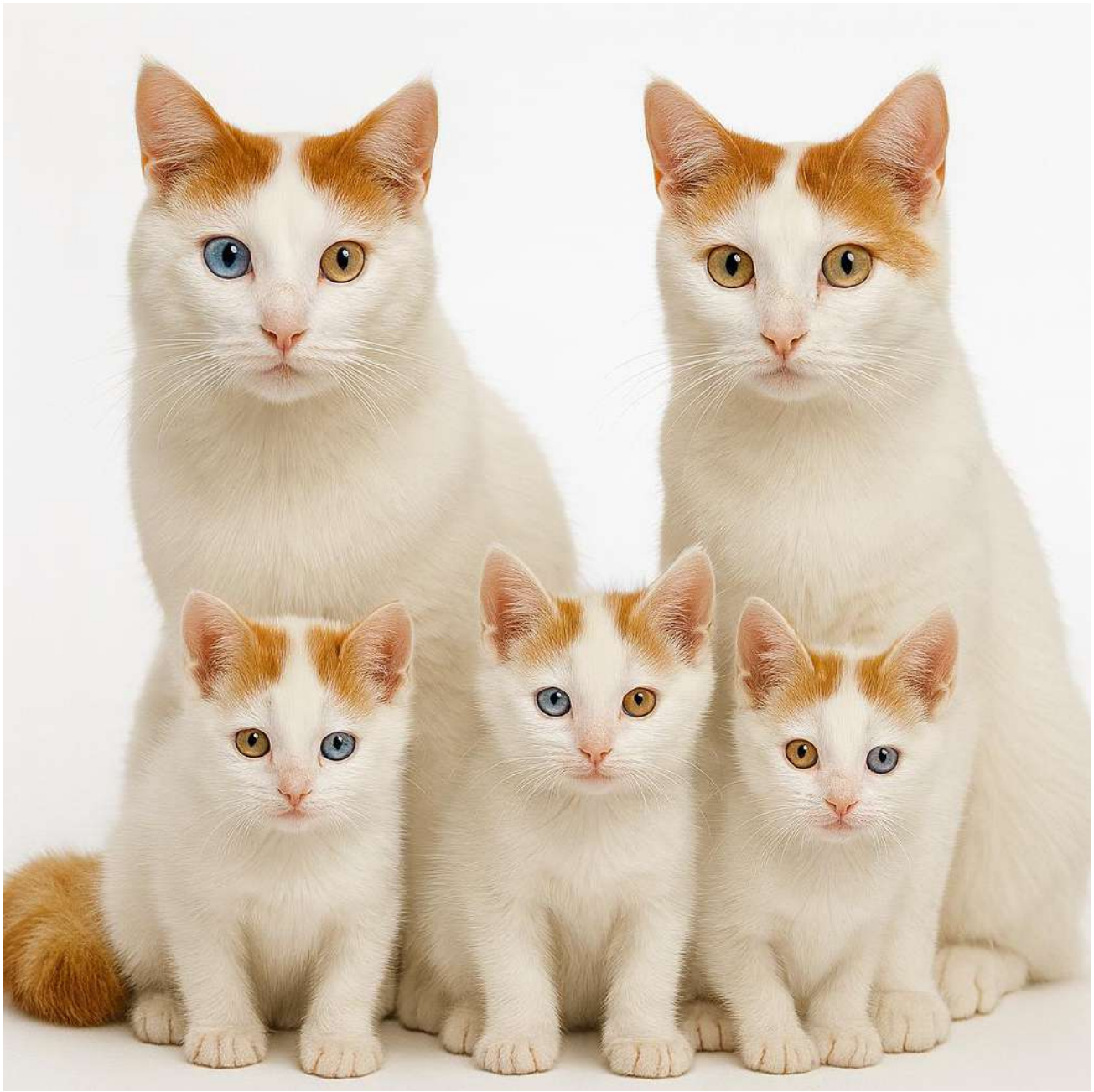
In Kurdish culture, cats are loved and respected. They protect food, bring warmth to the home, and keep company with the old and the young. Children grow up playing with them on rooftops, and grandmothers often say, “A house without a cat has no soul.” The Pişîleî Wanê, with its mismatched eyes, is believed to bring calmness, luck, and protection from jealousy and evil spirits. Many Kurds believe that these cats can sense danger long before humans can — that they carry a quiet blessing wherever they walk.

*Soft paws on warm stone,*

*sunlight in your eyes of two worlds,*

*you curl into the heart of every home,*

*and the house becomes alive because of you.*



## 🐆 2.7- Pişikê Şevê / Pişilei Şewê (پشکێ شەڤێ / پشیلەی شەو ) - The Civet Cat (Viverricula indica)— The Perfumed Shadow of the Night/ The Silent Scent of Kurdistan

The **Pişikê Şevê**, the civet of the Kurdish night, moves like a whisper between trees and shadows — a slender, graceful creature with soft grey fur, faint black spots, and a long ringed tail that sways like a lantern's smoke in the dark. Its sharp, delicate face glows with intelligence; its eyes shine like drops of oil caught in lamplight. Along its body, thin stripes ripple like ink brushed across moonlit grass. Though gentle in form, it carries a secret power: a scent gland beneath its tail that produces the legendary **civet musk**, once treasured in ancient Mesopotamia for perfumes and healing salves. In the old days, caravans from **Hawraman, Kirmashan, Xoristan, Sharazur, and Urmê** spoke of this precious fragrance as "the breath of the night."

The Pişikê Şevê thrives in warm valleys, orchards, fig gardens, and river forests across **Kalar, Khanaqin, Halabja, Penjwin, Garmian, Kifri**, and the lower slopes of **Hewraman, Shaho, Kirmashan, Ilam, and Luristan (Xorawa–Xoristan)**. It wanders silently through date groves near **Rojava, Serêkaniyê, Hesîçe**, and along the Sirwan and Little Zab river corridors. By day it hides in hollow logs, abandoned burrows, stone terraces, or dense briar, emerging only after sunset — soft-footed, graceful, and almost invisible. It feeds on small rodents, frogs, beetles, lizards, and sweet fruits, especially ripe figs, mulberries, and dates. Many villagers know its presence not by sight but by the faint musk it leaves behind, or by the tiny paw prints it presses in the dust near wells and irrigation paths.

Unlike wildcats, the Pişikê Şevê avoids conflict. It does not harm chickens or livestock; instead, it dives after insects and slips quietly past human homes, guided by moonlight and instinct. Its hunting is gentle — a calculated step, a flick of whiskers, a silent leap between stones.

In springtime, the civet prepares a hidden den beneath thick shrubs or old terraces. The mother gives birth to two to four kits, small and pale like morning mist. Their eyes open

after two weeks, revealing the same glimmering intelligence. Through the summer they follow their mother, learning the language of shadows, leaves, and night paths. By autumn, their coats have darkened, matching the orchards where they roam.

In Kurdish folklore, the Pişikê Şevê has always held a mysterious and protective presence. Old healers believed its musk carried **“nîşana stêran”** — *the scent of stars*. Sacred groves in **Hawraman and Kirmashan** forbade harming a civet, for villagers said:
**“Pişikê Şevê rêya şevê nas dike, lê axê rojê naxwîne.”**
*“The civet knows the paths of night, but never eats the dust of day.”*

To many, its passing sound brings calm, not fear — a guardian spirit of orchards, a keeper of sleep, a reminder that night holds its own beauty.

Today, the Pişikê Şevê grows rare, losing its home to shrinking forests, expanding farms, and illegal trapping for musk. Yet small, quiet populations still survive along the **Sirwan and Dîyalê valleys**, in the secluded groves of **Halabja, Penjwin**, and the lower Zagros foothills near **Ilam and Kirmashan**. Conservationists now encourage villagers to protect this gentle nocturnal jewel — for once it disappears, a piece of night’s ancient magic will fade with it.

*Soft paws in the fig grove,*
*moonlight gliding across silent fur —*
*a breath of perfume,*
*and it is gone,*
*the Pişikê Şevê, shadow of the night.*

## 🐻 2.8- Wirçên Zagrosê / Wirçê Kurdistanê / Wirçê Gewr

## (ورچی زاگرۆس ورچی کوردستان / ورچی گەورە) — The Zagros Brown Bear / Kurdistan Brown Bear

Among the high forests and cold rivers of Kurdistan roams one of its oldest guardians — the **Wirçên Zagrosê**, the Brown Bear of the Zagros Mountains. Massive yet gentle, feared yet respected, it moves with the ancient patience of the land. When it rises on its hind legs, towering above the oak trunks and grey stones, it becomes a moving mountain — a living symbol of endurance, courage, and silent wisdom.

Its fur carries the colours of Kurdistan itself: dusted bronze, honey-gold, and pale silver around the shoulders and muzzle. In its small dark eyes there lives a calm intelligence. A full-grown male may stand **over 2.2 meters** and weigh **up to 250 kilograms**, though despite this size, it walks softly across the forest floor as if born from the earth. The bear's homeland stretches across the wild mountains of **Halgurd, Shaho, Hawraman, Qandil, Bradost, Hakkarî, Wan, Agirî (Ağrı), and Ararat**, following rivers and oak forests that have sheltered its kind for thousands of years.

The Wirçên Zagrosê spends its days foraging in oak forests, alpine meadows, and shadowed valleys — digging for roots, tearing open logs for larvae, grazing on berries, raiding wild beehives, and climbing fig or pomegranate trees in summer. In autumn, it fattens on acorns, grapes, walnuts, and forest fruits to prepare for winter's long rest. When snow begins to fall on Qandil and Ararat, it retreats to its den in cliffs, caves, or hollow trees, entering a patient sleep while the land freezes above it.

Though capable of immense strength, the bear rarely seeks conflict. Shepherds in **Hakkarî, Hawraman, and Bradost** speak of seeing its shadow at dusk — a quiet shape slipping between trees like a spirit of the forest. In early spring, it emerges from hibernation, thin but strong, walking carefully toward the rivers where fish wake beneath melting snow.

Little is recorded of its breeding in Kurdistan, but like other brown bears, females mate in early summer and give birth deep in winter. Tiny blind cubs — usually two — nurse in warmth until spring, when the mother leads them outside for the first time. They tumble through the grass, learning to climb rocks, dig for food, and fish at the riverbank under her protective gaze. For two to three years, the cubs follow her through every season, learning the ancient language of the mountains until they are ready to wander alone.

In Kurdish culture, the Wirçên Zagrosê is a figure of wisdom, patience, and quiet guardianship. Elders used to say that when a bear stands, it greets the mountains; when it sleeps, the land rests more gently. To harm a bear without cause was once believed to anger the spirits of the forests. Children hear the story of **Mamê Wirç**, the wise bear who protected a lost shepherd boy and guided him home. In Hawraman and Hakkarî, some still whisper the name **Daya Çiya** — "Mother of the Mountain" — honouring the bear's gentle strength.

But the future of the Zagros Bear is uncertain. As roads spread into the forests of Qandil, Hakkarî, and Lorestan, and as oak woodlands shrink under human pressure, the bear's world grows smaller. Hunting, loss of food sources, and forest fires push it farther from its ancient paths. Conservationists across Kurdistan now work to protect its habitat and guide communities toward coexistence, reminding everyone that the survival of the bear is the survival of the forest itself.

*Slow step, wise heart,*
*you walk between the ages.*
*In your eyes the forest remembers*
*the first dawn of the world.*

## 🐾 2.9- Kûker / Kûkar / Kemtiyar / Kûkerê Zagrosê

### (کوکەر / کەمتیار / کوکەری زاگرۆس) — The Striped Hyena of Kurdistan / The Night Scavenger of Kurdistan (Hyaena hyaena syriaca)

Mysterious, ancient, and often misunderstood, the **Kûker**, the Striped Hyena of Kurdistan, roams the twilight hours like a keeper of forgotten truths. Its cry carries across dry valleys, abandoned ruins, and moonlit plains — a haunting reminder that wilderness still breathes just beyond the circle of human firelight. Though feared by some and mocked in old tales, the hyena is one of nature's most essential guardians: the silent recycler that cleans the land of decay.

The Kûker stands 70–85 cm at the shoulder, with a body length of 1–1.2 metres and weighing around 30–40 kilograms. Its coarse coat is pale grey or sandy yellow marked with bold black stripes, while a dark mane rises along its neck and back. When startled, this mane stands tall like a bristling storm, doubling the hyena's apparent size. Its face is strong, its jaws capable of crushing bone, yet its eyes hold a sharp intelligence — watchful, patient, and aware.

The Kûker lives across the semi-desert hills, rocky valleys, and scrublands of **southern, eastern, and western Kurdistan**. It is especially common around **Kifri, Kalar, Khanaqin, Mandali, Badra, Mehran, Tuz Khurmatu, Kirkuk's outskirts, and the warmer Zagros foothills of Ilam, Kermashan, and Lorestan**, as well as the open plains stretching toward **Rojava, Hesekê, Derik, Qamishlo**, and the desert fringes leading to **Shingal (Sinjar)**. These are lands of caves, ruins, and dry riverbeds — perfect for sheltering through the day before emerging into the cool breath of night.

Despite its fierce appearance, the hyena is shy and avoids humans whenever possible. It is an omnivore and master scavenger, feeding on carrion, bones, fruits, roots, and occasionally small animals. With its extraordinary sense of smell, it finds what others cannot — scraps buried deep in the earth, the remains of predators' kills, the forgotten

corners of nature. In doing so, the Kûker performs a sacred task: preventing disease, clearing decay, and returning balance to the land. It is nature's quiet sanitation worker, unthanked yet indispensable.

Mostly solitary, the Kûker often wanders alone, though pairs or small families may share territories. Its communication is subtle — short whoops, low growls, and shifting body postures. Through the night it may travel more than 30 kilometres, tracing the invisible paths of scent and memory.

Breeding can occur throughout the year, but most litters are born in late winter or early spring. After a gestation of around 90–95 days, the female gives birth to 2–4 cubs inside a secluded cave, crevice, or old burrow. Unlike other hyena species, both parents share the responsibility of raising and feeding the young. The cubs arrive with their eyes open and soft dark fur, learning quickly to gnaw bones and read the wind. By their first year they begin joining adults on night wanderings, stepping into the ancient rhythm of survival.

In Kurdish folklore, the Kûker holds a place of paradox — feared yet respected, mocked yet recognised for its strange wisdom. Its nighttime cry was said to mark the boundary between the seen and the unseen, warning travellers to return home. The old saying *"Kûker naje bê sedem" — "The hyena never moves without a reason"* — reflects both caution and admiration. Some tribes believed it guarded graveyards, protecting the resting dead from desecration. In ancient Mesopotamian carvings, hyenas appear beside priests and spirits of purification, symbols of cleansing, transformation, and renewal. Over generations, misinterpretation turned reverence into fear, yet the creature's true role has never changed: it restores balance by consuming what the world leaves behind.

The Kûker once ranged widely across all parts of Kurdistan, but its numbers have declined due to hunting, poisoning, road deaths, and habitat loss. Superstition remains its greatest enemy, even though it poses little danger to humans. Conservation efforts now focus on teaching communities the hyena's ecological importance, helping people understand that a land without scavengers soon becomes a land of disease.

Wanderer of ruins and moonlight,
you eat what others fear;
your shadow keeps the valley clean,
and your voice reminds us
that even silence must be fed.

## 🐺 2.10- Gurê Kurdistan / Gurê Zagrosê/ Gurê Spî

## (گورگی کوردستان / گورگی زاگرۆس) — The Kurdistan Wolf / White Wolf (Canis lupus pallipes)

Proud, loyal, and endlessly resilient, the **Gurê Kurdistan** — the Kurdistan Wolf — is the voice of the mountains and the heartbeat of the wild. Its haunting howl rises from the ridges of **Shaho, Halgurd, Hawraman, Amedi, Soran, Qandil, and Bradost**, echoing through the cold air of **Hakkarî, Şirnex, Botan, and Cûdî**, rolling across the slopes of **Wan, Agirî (Ağrı), Ararat, Dersim, Bingol**, and drifting like an ancient song into the plains of **Rojava, Afrin, Serêkaniyê, Qamişlo**, and the deep valleys of **Lorestan, Ilam, Sine, Kirmashan**, and the borderlands of Armenia and Iran.
Wherever the land is wild, the wolf still walks — silent, watchful, woven into the stones and the snow.

The Kurdistan Wolf is a slender mountain wolf, a subspecies of the Grey Wolf shaped by the rugged terrain of the Zagros and Mesopotamian highlands. Standing **60–80 cm** tall and weighing **25–35 kilograms**, it is smaller than its northern cousins but faster, sharper, and more enduring. Its long legs carry it across steep passes, its narrow body slips between rocks, and its thick coat — pale grey, stone-brown, or creamy white — blends into snowfields, oak forests, and stony plains. Its eyes, amber or pale gold, hold the quiet wisdom of the mountains.

The wolf's homeland stretches across the high plains, forests, and steppe regions from **Hawraman and Lorestan** to the snowy belts of **Hakkarî, Wan, Agirî, and Ararat**. In these places, it lives not as a lone wanderer but as part of a small, tightly bonded family pack led by an alpha pair — a symbol of unity, loyalty, and cooperation. Wolves communicate through howls, posture, scent, and silent understanding, moving with precision during hunts. Their prey includes wild goats, deer, hares, rodents, and sometimes livestock when winter bites hard, though wolves prefer the challenge and honour of hunting wild game.

When snow falls on the Zagros peaks and the wind sweeps across Ararat's white slopes, the wolf travels far, guided by instinct and the strength of its family. A wolf pack crossing a ridge is like a moving shadow — purposeful, coordinated, unwavering. In Kurdistan's ecosystems, the wolf is both predator and protector, keeping balance by controlling overpopulated herbivores and scavengers.

When winter softens, new life begins. In hidden dens beneath rocks or the roots of ancient oaks, the female gives birth to **four to seven pups** after a two-month gestation. The tiny blind pups are cared for not only by their mother and father but by the entire pack — each wolf guarding the den, bringing food, and teaching the growing young the ways of the mountains. By autumn, the pups join their family in coordinated hunts, learning to move like shadows across the slopes of **Qandil, Hakkarî, and Hawraman**. Their loyalty to one another is deep; a wolf rarely abandons family.

In Kurdish culture, **Gurê Kurdistan** is a sacred symbol of bravery (**qehremanî**), freedom (**azadî**), loyalty (**bawerî**), and endurance. Some tribes honour the wolf as an ancestral totem, and ancient Median and Hurrian myths describe it as a guardian of justice. Shepherds used to say wolves were sent by **Xwedê** to test human vigilance, reminding people that strength must be met with respect.
Old proverbs still echo their wisdom:
**"Gurê spi naxwe, lê xwe nafirîne."**
*"The white wolf does not eat without reason, nor howl without meaning."*

Yet the future of the Kurdistan Wolf is fragile. Hunting, habitat loss, poisoned carcasses, and retaliation for livestock losses have reduced its numbers, even in remote areas of **Qandil, Hakkarî, Dersim, and Lurestan**. And still, it endures — a survivor of centuries of storms, wars, and wandering. Conservationists now work to protect the wolf's role in maintaining ecological balance, reminding people that where the wolf still howls, **the land is still free**.

*Brother of wind and snow,*
*you walk the silent ridges alone.*

*In your voice, the mountains speak —*

*in your eyes, the dawn remembers.*

## 🦊 2.11- Rovî / Rêwî (ڕێوی / ڕۆڤی) — The Kurdish Red Fox (Vulpes vulpes kurdistanica)

Graceful, clever, and quietly watchful, the **Rovî** — the Kurdish Red Fox — is one of the most familiar and enchanting creatures of Kurdistan. Wherever there are villages, forests, valleys, or oak-covered hills, the fox's soft shadow moves at twilight, slipping between the wild and human worlds with effortless ease. It is the messenger of dusk, the whispering storyteller of mountains and plains.
Its fur glows with shifting hues of copper, gold, and silver depending on the light. The long tail — the **komê Rovî** — is full and elegant, tipped often with white, carried like a banner of quiet pride. Its triangular face, pointed ears, and sharp amber eyes hold both intelligence and mystery. The fox is light-footed, curious, and cunning — able to disappear into thickets or grass as swiftly as a flame turning into smoke.

The Rovî lives across all regions of Kurdistan, flourishing in the rugged mountains of **Qandil, Bradost, Penjwen, Amedi, Soran**, and the high ridges of **Shaho and Hawraman**. In **Bakur**, it roams the cold plateaus and forests of **Hakkarî (Colemerg), Şirnex, Botan, Garzan, Dersim, Bingol, Wan, and Agirî/Ararat**.
In **Rojhilat**, it wanders the deep oak valleys of **Sine, Mahabad, Urmia, Kermashan, Ilam, and Lorestan**.
Across **Rojava**, it moves through the olive groves of **Afrin**, the plains of **Kobanê and Serêkaniyê**, and the riverbanks near **Qamişlo and Derik**.
Wherever twilight falls, the fox walks — silent, careful, and timeless.

Nocturnal by nature, the Rovî rests during the day in dens beneath tree roots, rock crevices, or abandoned burrows, emerging at sunset when the land cools. Its diet is broad and adaptable: rodents, insects, small birds, fruits, figs, mulberries, grapes, and sometimes the leftovers of villages.
It hunts with astonishing precision, tilting its head to listen to the faintest sound before pouncing with a spring so sudden it seems magical. In winter, its delicate footprints

mark thin silver trails across the snow of **Hakkarî, Shaho, and Qandil**, mapping its nightly wanderings.

Despite its cunning reputation, the Rovî is playful and gentle — chasing its own tail under moonlight, tossing berries in the air, or leaping between rocks for sheer joy. Beneath its grace lies a sharp intelligence: it remembers food caches, reads scents like a story, and adapts to seasons with ease.

As winter fades, the fox's quiet family world awakens. After a gestation of about 50 days, the female gives birth to **3–6 pups** in an underground den hidden beneath rocks, shrubs, or ancient tree roots. The male brings food and guards the entrance, watching the shadows with patience and devotion. The pups, blind and covered in soft grey down, open their eyes after two weeks.
By early summer, their coats turn copper-red, and they begin playing outside the den — tumbling, wrestling, and learning the art of hunting through mimicry and play. Their parents teach them stealth, patience, and awareness until they disperse in early autumn to begin their own solitary wanderings.

In Kurdish folklore, the Rovî is both trickster and sage — cunning, wise, and deeply respected. Villagers often call it **zekîtirîn ajel** — *the cleverest animal*.
Many old tales speak of **Rovî Çawan**, the Fox of Moonlight, who outwitted hunters, wolves, and even demons through calm intelligence.
Children grow up with bedtime stories where the fox teaches humility, wisdom, and strategy over brute strength.
Kurdish proverbs reflect its nature:
**"Rovî na derxet bê sedemê."**
*"The fox never steps without reason."*

Though still common across Kurdistan, the Rovî faces threats from shrinking habitats, road traffic, and occasional persecution. Yet it remains vital for nature, keeping rodent populations in balance and maintaining healthy ecosystems. Conservationists and villagers increasingly recognise the fox as a silent ally — a guardian of both fields and

forests.

To see a fox at dusk is a gentle blessing, a meeting between worlds that rarely touch.

*Child of cunning and light,*

*your eyes are lanterns in the dusk.*

*You vanish with the wind —*

*leaving only wonder behind.*

## 🦮 2.12- Çeqal / Çakalê Kurdistanê / Gurê Çeqalî

## (چەقەڵ / چەکەڵ / چاکاڵی کوردستان / گورگی چەقەڵی) — The Golden Jackal / The Jackal of Kurdistan (Canis aureus)

Clever, alert, and full of restless energy, the **Çeqal**, the Golden Jackal of Kurdistan, is the storyteller of the valleys — a creature whose voice weaves through the night like a thread of ancient laughter. When the moon hangs over the plains of Garmian or rises above the reeds of Khanaqin, when the winds run across the edges of Amed or Wan, the jackal's distant cry lifts into the sky, carrying secrets of the land. Neither wolf nor fox, it walks between both worlds — a quiet scavenger, a brave hunter, and a survivor shaped by thousands of Kurdish nights.

The Kurdish jackal moves with a slender, graceful body, measuring 70–85 cm and weighing 8–12 kilograms. Its coat shifts with season and light — sometimes gold like the wheat fields of Rojava, sometimes sandy like the lowlands of Ilam, sometimes grey like the foothills of Hawraman and Shaho. Its amber eyes shine with curiosity and cunning, and when it runs across open land, its movement is swift and smooth, like wind sweeping over dry grass. The Çeqal lives everywhere life endures: in **Garmian, Ranya, Kalar, Kifri, Khanaqin, Kirkuk, and Chamchamal**; along the river valleys of **Sirwan and Little Zab**; in the forest edges of **Hawraman, Shaho, Merîwan, Bane, and Paveh**; in the plains around **Mêrdîn, Amed, Wan, and Botan**; and in the dry open lands of **Rojava** from **Qamislo and Hesekê to Afrin and Derik**. It is one of the few animals that thrives beside humans without ever losing its wildness.

Jackals are social but do not form large packs like wolves. They live as pairs — a bonded couple and their young — moving as one family through their territory. They hunt together, defend together, and raise their pups with quiet devotion. Their diet is flexible, just like their spirit: small mammals, birds, lizards, fruit, fish from shallow rivers, or carrion left behind by larger predators. They are nature's cleaners, recycling what others abandon and keeping the land healthy.

Their voice is the true mark of their presence: a rising chain of howls and sharp yips lifted from ridgelines at dusk. When one jackal begins, another answers from far across the valley, and then another, until the land seems to hum with their chorus. Shepherds in **Qandil, Barzan, Hakkarî, and Dersim** say this sound holds the rhythm of the mountains, a reminder that night belongs not to silence but to story.

Mating comes in winter. After about 63 days, the female gives birth to 4–6 pups in a burrow or an abandoned fox den. The father brings food while the mother nurses, and together they teach their young to track insects and mice. By two months the pups stumble into sunlight, learning the world step by step; by autumn they begin to roam farther, though the family remains tightly bound. Jackal pairs stay together for years — loyal partners in both survival and song.

In Kurdish folklore, the Çeqal is the clever one — mischievous, talkative, always escaping traps and turning danger into victory. It is the trickster of old stories, a master of wit who teaches lessons through cunning rather than strength. Many Kurdish proverbs are born from its wisdom. In some villages it is said that when the jackal cries at night, change is coming — maybe a storm, maybe a guest, maybe a shift in fate that only wild ears can hear.

Though still common in many regions, the Golden Jackal faces threats: disappearing habitat, poisoned baits meant for wolves, shrinking wildlands around expanding towns. Yet it remains one of Kurdistan's most resilient animals — adapting, surviving, singing. Its endurance reflects the spirit of the Kurdish people: challenged by hardship, shaped by the land, but never silent.

*Voice of dusk and dawn,*
*golden wanderer of wind,*
*you laugh where silence sleeps,*
*and the valley answers your name.*

## 🐕 2.13- Kûçik / Seg / Se / Gemal / Segi Kurdistanê

### (سەگ / سە / گەماڵ / کوچیک / سەگی کوردستان) — The Kurdish Dog — The Guardian of the Flock (Canis familiaris kurdistanicus)

The **Segê Kurdistan**, the ancient guardian dog of the mountains, is the silent heartbeat of pastoral life — the protector that walks before the flock and sleeps with one eye open beneath the stars. From the cold winds of **Hawraman and Şaho** to the wide pastures of **Soran, Hakkarî (Colemêrg), Amed, Dersim, Çewlîk, Garzan, Botan, Wan (Urmê), Qers, Erzerom**, and the rolling hills of **Garmiyan, Kalar, Kifri, Rojava, Afrin, Serêkaniyê, Kobanê**, the Kurdish shepherd dog has lived side by side with the Kurdish people for thousands of years. You find it wherever sheep and goats graze — in the oak forests of **Kirmashan, Ilam, Loristan (Xorawa, Xoristan)**, on the plateaus of **Mahabad, Urmia, Ardalan (Sine)**, and across the plains leading toward **Tîsfon, Baghdad, and Neynawa**.

Built for mountains, it walks like a guardian carved from stone — steady, deliberate, unshaken by wind or wolves. Kurdish shepherd dogs are famed for their courage. They stand alone against wolves, jackals, and even leopards, never abandoning the flock entrusted to them. They think for themselves, choose their own paths, judge danger before the shepherd sees it. And when the work is done, these giants become gentle as lambs, letting village children hang on their necks or sleep beside them on cold nights.

Large and muscular, with thick mountain fur and powerful jaws, the Segê Kurdistan is a living wall of strength. Their coats are white, cream, grey, or brown, sometimes marked with a dark muzzle. Their deep, expressive eyes hold both fire and kindness — the dual spirit needed to protect life. In the high mountains of **Hakkari, Şirnex, Wan, Qers, Arta, and Erzerom**, snow gathers on their fur like dust on old warriors, yet they continue walking without hesitation. Males often reach 60–70 kilograms, standing 70–80 centimetres tall — enough to stop a wolf with a single blow.

The female gives birth once or twice a year, usually to 5–8 pups. For months, the pups follow the flock like curious shadows, learning by watching the older guardians. By their first year, they know every face, every path, every threat. The bond between a shepherd and his Seg is sacred — not ownership, but brotherhood. Many shepherds say a good dog will die for the flock, but a great dog will die for the shepherd.

In Kurdish culture, the shepherd dog is honoured as the **nāçîr**, the fearless one. Old tales call it “the warrior of silence” and “the mountain’s shield.” Villagers say:
**“Seg, xweş diçite şêrê.”**
*“The dog walks proudly, for he has fought lions.”*

When a loyal Seg dies, some families bury it on the hillside where it once guarded the flock, marking the grave with stones — a gesture of respect for a companion who protected their life, their food, and their peace.

*Under the moon you stand —*
*neither beast nor servant,*
*but brother of the shepherd,*
*keeper of peace and sleep.*

## 🐕 2.14- Tajî / Tacî / Tazî (تازی / تاجی / تاژی) — The Kurdish Sighthound — The Runner of the Plains (Tazi Dog)

The **Tajî**, the Kurdish sighthound of the plains, is one of the oldest and most noble hunting companions of the Zagros world — a creature shaped by wind, horizon, and the endless chase. For thousands of years it has raced across the open lands of **Erbil (Hewlêr), Koya, Kirkuk, Garmian, Kifri, Darbandikhan, Makhmur, Tuz Khurmatu**, and the rolling steppe stretching toward **Mosul (Neynawa), Rojava, Serêkaniyê, Raqqa, and the Jazira plains**. Its presence is equally ancient in the foothills of **Kermashan, Ilam, Luristan (Xoristan, Xorawa), Urmê (Urmia), Mahabad**, and the northern wheat lands near **Amed, Mêrdîn, Riha (Şanlıurfa), and Dilok (Gaziantep)** — wherever open plains invite speed and wide skies call for a hunter's eye.

The Tajî is the friend of hunters and the dancer of empty horizons. Unlike guardian dogs of the mountains, it hunts not with noise or force, but with sight — a flash of movement, a burst of speed, a silent glide across earth. When a hare or fox bolts across the plain, the Tajî does not bark; instead, it becomes motion itself, stretching its long, slender body like an arrow released from an ancient bow. It runs low to the ground, almost floating, guided by instincts older than history.

Tall, elegant, and refined, the Tajî carries the beauty of simplicity. Its smooth coat — golden, sandy, white, or light brown — blends with the colours of Kurdish steppe and desert. The legs are long and delicate, yet surprisingly strong; the chest narrow but deep for breath; the head refined and noble, framed by soft hanging ears. Its eyes are bright and searching, always reading the horizon. When it moves, its shadow becomes a line — thin, swift, and barely touching the earth.

Once a year, the female gives birth to 3–6 pups, small and quiet but full of fire. From a young age they learn by watching the elders: first a gentle chase after cloth or feathers, then a run after small prey, and finally real hunts across the plains. Tajî dogs bond deeply with their handlers, often following them everywhere — to the market, the fields,

the riverbanks. They sleep outside the family tent or doorway as silent companions, their loyalty written in patience, not noise.

In Kurdish culture, the Tajî is a symbol of **nobility, pride, and honour**. Old tribes of the plains held night hunts and races, where dozens of sighthounds ran like shadows under the moon, competing in beauty and speed. Among the elders it is said:
**“Tajî dipeşe şevê — lê dilê wê roj e.”**
*“The Tazi runs in the night — but its heart belongs to the day.”*

Its ancient roots are carved on Mesopotamian stones, older than empire and king — lean hounds painted on clay tablets, running beside hunters just as they still do today in Garmian and Kirkuk. The Tajî is not merely a dog; it is a memory of civilisation, a thread between Kurdish earth and the first human footsteps of the plains.

*You do not run —*
*you fly between earth and air.*
*The wind follows you,*
*and the desert remembers your shadow.*

## 🐶 2.15- Tule /Tulê Kurdistanê (تۆلەی کوردستان / تولّه) — The Kurdish Terrier — The Little Hunter of the Hills (Small Hunting Dog)

The **Tule**, the small but fierce hunting dog of Kurdistan, is a creature shaped by stone, shadow, and courage. Though tiny beside the great shepherd dogs of the highlands, the Tule carries a heart far larger than its body — a brave spark that has guarded Kurdish homes and guided hunters for generations. It thrives in rocky valleys, oak-covered slopes, and thorny hillsides, especially in **Hawraman, Şaho, Sine (Ardalan), Kirmashan, Rawanduz, Bradost, Soran**, and the rugged foothills stretching toward **Şirnex, Botan, Amed countryside, Rojava villages, Urmê (Urmia), Ilam, and the stony lands of Xoristan and Luristan**. Wherever badgers dig, foxes hide, or porcupines slip between rocks, the Tule is there — quick, bright, and fearless.

Small, sharp, and astonishingly courageous, the Tule works closely with Kurdish hunters, rushing into burrows and narrow tunnels that no other dog can enter. It barks, distracts, and flushes animals out of their dens, guiding them toward hunters or larger hounds. Its mind is fast — calculating movement, reading scent, listening for shifting earth beneath its paws. When the day's work is done, however, this fierce little hunter becomes soft and affectionate, curling at the feet of its family or playing gently with village children.

The Tule stands only 25–35 centimetres tall, yet it looks like a compact storm of muscle and purpose. Its coat — tan, black, white, or patched — is coarse enough to resist thorns and winter winds. Its legs are short but powerful, its tail curls upward, and its alert eyes burn with curiosity and determination. When it moves, it darts like a spark from flint, weaving between rocks with the speed and precision of a hunting hawk.

Females give birth twice a year to 3–5 pups. From their earliest weeks, the young are taught the ancient arts of digging, tracking, and barking at burrow mouths. But the greatest training of a Tule is not physical — it is emotional. These dogs bond with their handlers deeply, following them with unwavering loyalty. A Tule raised beside a

shepherd or hunter often becomes a shadow of its human, sleeping beside the door and waking at the slightest noise.

To Kurdish villagers, the Tule is more than a dog — it is a symbol of **courage in smallness**. People often say:
**“Tule piçûk e, lê dilê wê mezine.”**
*“The Tule is small, but its heart is mighty.”*

Families sometimes call it **şêrê piçûk** — *“the little lion”* — for it protects homes from snakes, rats, and any intruder who dares approach in the dark. Even in modern times, many Kurdish households keep a Tule beside their big Seg guardian dog, believing that the large dog protects the flock, but the little dog protects the soul of the house.

*Little hunter,*
*the mountain echoes your bark —*
*small shadow of courage,*
*swift spirit of the stone.*

## 🐇 2.16- Kûsikê Çiya / Kerwêşki Şaxî (کەرۆیشکی شاخی / کوسیکێ چیا)

## — The Kurdistan Hare — The Long-Eared Hare of Kurdistan (Lepus europaeus kurdistanicus)

Swift, alert, and born of open horizons, the **Kerwêşki Şaxî** — “the long-eared little one” — is one of the most enduring and graceful mammals of Kurdistan. Moving lightly across meadows, foothills, and wide plains at dusk and dawn, it is like a whisper of the land itself — a silent messenger of the wild.

This regional subspecies of the European Brown Hare (Lepus europaeus kurdistanicus) is well adapted to Kurdistan’s warm summers, cool winters, and semi-arid hills. It ranges across **Amedi, Duhok, Zakho, Barzan, Bradost, Ranya, Slemani, Kalar, Kifri, Khanaqin, Kirmashan, Ilam, Dehloran, Hawraman, Shaho**, and the rolling steppe valleys stretching toward **Sirwan** and the Mesopotamian lowlands. Wherever golden grass sways beneath open sky, the Kerwêşki Şaxî makes its home.

It stands 45–60 cm long, with ears reaching up to 12 cm — the perfect tools for detecting distant danger. Weighing 3–5 kilograms, its fur glows golden-brown with pale underparts, blending so seamlessly into the fields that it seems made of light and dust.

The hare thrives in open fields, low mountains, plains, and forest edges where it can spot predators from afar. It is most active at dawn and dusk, feeding on grasses, herbs, young shoots, and wildflowers. During the day, it rests in shallow ground depressions called *forms*, relying on camouflage rather than burrows.
When danger approaches, it freezes — becoming invisible — then bursts into a sprint that can reach more than 70 km/h, zigzagging across the land to evade foxes, wolves, and golden eagles.

Breeding takes place several times a year, especially from February to August. After a short gestation of about 42–44 days, the female gives birth to 2–4 leverets directly on open ground. The young are born fully furred and with eyes open, ready to move within

hours. The mother visits them briefly and rarely, keeping distance to avoid attracting predators. By a few weeks old, they can already run, forage, and survive — small bodies shaped by an ancient urgency of life.

In Kurdish culture, the hare is a symbol of intuition, alertness, and nimble wisdom. Elders say:
**“Kerwêşki şaxî xewnê xwe di xewa dijî.”**
*“The long-eared one dreams with its eyes open.”*
In children’s stories, it is the clever trickster who outwits wolves and foxes, teaching that intelligence can defeat brute strength. In springtime art and Newroz poems, it appears as a sign of renewal, fertility, and the joy of returning light.

The Kerwêşki Şaxî remains common in some regions, but its numbers decline where grasslands have been ploughed into fields or where pesticides and overgrazing reduce wild plants. In parts of **Garmian, Khanaqin, Ilam, and Slemani’s plains**, populations have shrunk due to hunting and habitat loss. Protecting natural grasslands and limiting unnecessary hunting will ensure this gentle runner of dawn continues to thrive where mountains melt into open steppe.

Child of the wind,
your ears listen to dreams.
You run between moon and dawn,
carrying silence on your feet.

## 🐇 2.17- Kûsikê Deştê / Kerwêşkî Deştî (کوسکێ دەشتێ / کەرۆێشکی دەشتی)

## — The Desert Hare/ The Desert Hare of Kurdistan — Spirit of the Southern Plains (Lepus capensis)

Light-footed and alert, the **Kerwêşkî Deştî** is the desert cousin of the mountain hare (Kerwêşkî Şaxî) — a swift, resilient creature that thrives in the dry grasslands and semi-arid valleys of **Ilam, Kirkuk, Kalar, Kifri, Garmian, Xaneqîn, Mandalî, Khanaqin plains**, and the wider **Khuzestan–Zagros lowlands**.
It also appears across the warmer belts of **Rojava**, especially near **Derik, Qamislo, Hesekê, and the Euphrates plains**, and sparsely in the open steppe regions of **Amed, Mêrdîn, and Siverek**.
It embodies the soul of the open steppe: quiet, cautious, and always ready to leap toward freedom.

Kerwêşkî Deştî avoids forests and high mountains, preferring wide plains, wheat fields, rocky deserts, and scrublands where its pale coat blends effortlessly with the dry earth. It spends the day resting in shallow, grass-lined hollows and becomes active with dusk. When startled, it explodes into motion — reaching **70 km/h**, zigzagging like a streak of dust and moonlight. It feeds on grasses, roots, herbs, and wild seeds, its constant grazing helping to shape and renew the fragile steppe vegetation.

Slender and elegant, this hare has long black-tipped ears, wide night-bright eyes, and powerful hind legs built for silence and speed. Its coat is pale golden, sand-coloured, or grey-white — lighter than the mountain hare — allowing it to vanish into sunburnt plains. Adults weigh **2–3 kg** and measure **40–55 cm** in length, their bodies sculpted for endurance across open land.

Breeding begins in spring and continues into early summer. The female — **nêk** — gives birth to **2–4 leverets**, fully furred and with open eyes, already half-ready for the world. Hares do not dig burrows; instead, the mother hides each young in separate spots,

visiting them quietly at night to nurse. This ancient strategy keeps predators — foxes, eagles, and wildcats — from discovering the entire litter, giving each tiny life a chance to survive.

In Kurdish tradition, Kerwêşkî Deştî represents cleverness, alertness, and beauty. It appears in folktales as the quick-thinking trickster who escapes danger with wit rather than strength. Shepherds often say:

**“Kerwêşkî Deştî hergiz li dijminê xwe naxewt.”**

*“The desert hare never kneels to its enemy.”*

Children once chased hares during spring festivals, not to catch them, but to test their own speed — believing that touching the hare’s shadow brings luck.

Although still common in many parts of southern and central Kurdistan, its numbers are slowly declining due to hunting, shrinking habitat, vehicle collisions, and the spread of new farmlands. It remains a vital prey species for Kurdish foxes, eagles, owls, and even wolves, forming a crucial link in the natural web. Conservation efforts in regions such as **Garmian, Mandalî, Ilam plains, and the Sirwan basin** are gradually increasing awareness of its importance to the steppe ecosystem.

*Runner of light and dust,*
*your steps draw silence on the plain.*
*The wind is your brother,*
*and the horizon your home.*

## 🐇 2.18 – Qûzikê Mâlê / Qûzikê Xwêndanê (کەرۆیشکی خۆمالّی) The Kurdish Home Rabbit — The Gentle Companion of the Highlands— Oryctolagus cuniculus domesticus

Soft as a spring cloud and quiet as dawn light, the **Qûzikê Mâlê**, the Kurdish home rabbit, is one of the most beloved companions in homes across all parts of Kurdistan. From the rooftops of **Silemanî**, the gardens of **Amedi**, **Akre**, and **Zakho**, the courtyards of **Hawraman** and **Shaho**, to the warm farmlands of **Rojava**, **Derik**, **Qamişlo**, and **Hesekê**, this gentle creature brings innocence and calm wherever it hops. Families in **Sine, Mahabad, Urmia, Kermashan, Luristan**, and the mountain villages of **Hakkarî, Wan, and Agirî** treasure these rabbits as quiet friends who brighten both home and heart.

Whether white as fresh snow, golden like ripened wheat, black as the mountain night, or playfully speckled like a village quilt, each rabbit carries its own small story. Their fur is soft and warm, their noses twitch with curiosity, and their long whiskers read the world with the sensitivity of a tiny poet. Even the smallest newborn, no larger than a handful, arrives with a heart full of wonder.

Shy yet affectionate, the Qûzikê Mâlê loves safety, warmth, and routine. When it trusts its home, it hops bravely across courtyards, explores corners with gentle curiosity, nibbles on herbs, greens, and sweet leaves, and curls into blankets and warm shadows. A rabbit speaks without words — a soft nudge of affection, a gentle tooth-click of happiness, a quiet rhythmic hop when excitement fills its little chest. Its world is built on trust, calm, and familiar hands.

Across Kurdistan, rabbits are raised not only as pets but as members of the household. In **Sine, Mahabad, Piranshar**, and the villages of **Shaho** and **Hawraman**, children grow up with the soft patter of tiny feet following them across stone courtyards. In **Duhok, Barzan, Kalar, Soran**, and the plains of **Rojava**, rabbits sit peacefully near the doorway, watching the world with round, patient eyes. During **Newroz, Eid**, and spring

celebrations, rabbits are sometimes gifted as symbols of new life, blessing, and gentle fortune. Kurdish families often say:

**“Qûzikê mîrîşkî dilê zarok e.”**
*The rabbit is the child’s heart-bird*.

To keep a rabbit healthy, families offer clean water, fresh herbs, vegetables, and soft hay, and protect it from harsh heat or winter frost. Rabbits thrive on kindness, gentle voices, and time to hop freely through the home. With love and proper care, a Qûzikê Mâlê can live **eight to twelve years**, becoming a quiet companion who grows alongside the family.

In Kurdish folklore, the rabbit symbolises gentleness, innocence, and spring renewal. Old stories from **Barzan**, **Hawraman**, **Botan**, and the plains of **Serhed** say that a rabbit resting calmly near your doorway means peaceful spirits watch over the home. Children were told that if a rabbit hopped into the garden at dawn, the year would be full of prosperity and blessing.

*Soft traveller of the hearth,*
*your feet make no sound,*
*yet your presence fills the home*
*with gentleness and light.*
*Where you rest, calm blossoms —*
*little guardian of quiet hearts.*

## 🐐 2.19- Bizna Aza / Bizne Kêwî / Bizna Çiyayan / Bizna Çiyayî / Bizne Şaxê / Bizna Zagrosê ( بزنه ئازا/ بزنه کێوی / بزنی چیا / بزنه شاخه / بزنی چیایان / بزنی زاگرۆس) — The Mountain Goat of Kurdistan -Bezoar Ibex of Kurdistan (Capra aegagrus)

**The Wild Goat of the Kurdish Highlands and the National Animal of Kurdistan**

Among the jagged cliffs and sunlit ridges of Kurdistan leaps one of nature's most timeless athletes — the **Bizna Aza**, the wild goat of the Zagros and Kurdish mountains. Agile as wind and proud as stone, it belongs to the heights, living where no hunter or shepherd can easily follow. Its curved horns — sweeping backward like crescent moons — gleam beneath the mountain sun, a crown of freedom and endurance.
The male, powerful and broad-chested, carries horns that can exceed a metre, spiraling like ancient Kurdish calligraphy carved into the sky; the female is smaller, her horns slender and elegant. Their coats shift with the seasons — pale sand in summer, thick smoky-grey in winter — blending perfectly with the cliffs and boulders of their homeland. When they climb, they seem almost weightless, each step a dance upon the very edge of the world.

The Bizna Aza lives across the highest and rawest cliffs of **Qandil, Bradost, Hakkarî, Şirnex, Garzan, Botan, Ararat, Agirî, Dersim, and Bingol**, moving like living shadows along slopes where the sun arrives late and leaves early. In **Başûr**, it roams the steep ridges of **Amedi, Soran, Choman, Rawanduz, Penjwen, Silemanî**, and the stone labyrinths of **Hawraman and Shaho**. In **Rojhilat**, it survives in the ancient oak mountains of **Lorestan, Ilam, Kirmashan, Sine**, and the borderlands where the Zagros rises like a wall of time. Even in the western highlands of **Afrin and Rojava**, the tales of old ibex sightings still echo among shepherds and elders.

It prefers the narrow ridgelines and broken cliffs where only silence lives. At dawn, it descends to drink from hidden springs between rocks; at sunset, it retreats upward again, vanishing into heights where the wind becomes its only companion. Feeding on

wild herbs, oak leaves, and mountain grasses, the ibex balances on ledges so narrow that even an eagle hesitates to land. When startled, it explodes upward with impossible grace, bounding through the air as if carried by the spirit of the mountains.

As autumn deepens, the males gather in fierce and thunderous contests. Their horns crash together, echoing across valleys of **Qandil and Hakkarî** like drums of the old world. These battles decide who earns the right to mate. After nearly 170 days of waiting, spring arrives with new life — one or two kids born on warm ledges under the cliffs. Within hours, the newborns stand on trembling legs, following their mothers into the world of stone and sky. By early summer, they leap and tumble across the rocks, practicing the art of balance that will one day carry them safely across the vertical world of the Zagros. The mother watches every step, guiding them with quiet, ancient patience.

In Kurdish folklore, the wild goat is a symbol of freedom, purity, and wild love. Called **Bêkêr** — *the untamed one* — it appears in love songs, shepherd poems, and ancient mountain stories. Elders once believed that seeing a white ibex at sunrise meant a year of luck and protection, for the mountains had revealed one of their hidden guardians. On ancient Kurdish seals and carvings from the Zagros, the ibex's spiraled horns appear as sacred motifs, symbols of fertility, strength, and divine blessing. From its horn came the traditional flute **şimşal**, whose soft music imitates the wind flowing through the cliffs.

Today, the Bizna Aza survives only in the remotest mountain walls of Kurdistan. Overhunting, habitat loss, and encroaching roads have pushed it into shrinking refuges in **Qandil, Bradost, Hakkarî, Hawraman, Shaho, and Lorestan**. Yet, where communities protect the mountains and hunting traditions fade, small herds return — light-footed and eternal. Conservation groups now work with villagers and shepherds to preserve these herds, reminding everyone that the ibex is not a trophy, but a sacred spirit of the cliffs.
Where the ibex leaps, the mountains breathe — and where the mountains breathe, Kurdistan remains alive.

*Child of the rock and sky,*

*you walk the thin edge of silence.*

*Even the wind steps softly*

*where your shadow falls.*

## 🦌 2.20- Şûr / Maralê Kurdistanê / Gewazê Şaxî / Gewazê Zagrosê (شوور / مارالی کوردستان / گوازه شاخی / گوازه زاگرۆس) — The Red Deer / The Noble Deer of Kurdistan (Cervus elaphus maral)

Graceful, watchful, and noble in bearing, the **Şûr** — the Red Deer — is the beating heart of Kurdistan's ancient woodlands. When the morning mist rises from the valleys and sunlight filters through the oak leaves of **Shaho, Halgurd, Hawraman, Qandil, Bradost, Amedi, and Soran**, the deer's form appears like a moving dream — silent, elegant, and free. It is a creature of peace, but also of quiet strength, living as both symbol and soul of the wild.

The males, with their magnificent antlers, can weigh up to 300 kilograms and stand over a metre tall at the shoulder. Their coats glow reddish-brown in summer and turn grey in winter, blending perfectly with the forest shadows. The females, slender and gentle-eyed, move with a softness that seems to calm the land itself.
Across **Rojhilat**, the Red Deer still survives in small numbers in the deep valleys of **Mahabad, Urmia, Merîwan, Kermashan, Lorestan**, and the oaken belts of **Ilam**.
In **Bakur**, it wanders the high wooded slopes of **Dersim, Bingol, Botan, Hakkarî (Colemerg)** and the foothills of **Agirî/Ararat**.
Even in **Rojava**, small migratory groups occasionally follow the river corridors near **Derik and the Khabur plains**, ghosts of a once-great population.

At dawn and dusk, herds emerge quietly from the trees to graze on fresh grasses, herbs, and tender shoots. During the day, they retreat into shade and deep woodland stillness, relying on sharp hearing and scent to sense danger. When startled, the herd moves as one — swift, fluid, and soundless — vanishing into the forest like smoke dissolving into wind.
For most of the year, males keep to separate territories, returning only when autumn touches the leaves with gold and fire.

The rut begins in late September. The deep roar of the stag rolls through the valleys of **Shaho, Dersim, and Hawraman**, echoing like ancient thunder. Rivals clash antlers in

fierce but ritualised battles, their horns locking with the weight of centuries. The victor guards a small group of females through the season, a symbol of both strength and devotion.

After eight months of quiet waiting, the doe gives birth to a single fawn in spring. The newborn, speckled with pale white spots, lies hidden among ferns and forest blooms. The mother returns silently to nurse, her steps barely touching the ground. By early summer, the fawn follows her — a small echo of grace learning the secret paths of the mountains.
Where deer walk, the forest breathes more softly.

In Kurdish folklore, the Şûr is a creature of beauty, gentleness, and nobility. Poets compare its eyes to those of beloveds and its antlers to the crescent moon rising over the mountains. To harm a deer was once considered a spiritual offence, for it was said the deer carried **baraka** — blessing — in its gaze.
Ancient tales speak of hunters who laid down their bows upon seeing a deer, overcome by reverence. One legend tells of **Şûra Rojê**, the "Sun Deer," whose hoofprints brought water from dry earth and whose breath calmed storms.

Once abundant across Kurdistan, the Red Deer now survives in scattered and fragile herds. Deforestation, overhunting, war, and the loss of grazing grounds have pushed it into the most remote pockets of **Hawraman, Qandil, Shaho, Dersim, Amedi, and Lorestan**. Conservation efforts now aim to protect these last herds, reminding communities that the deer is not just an animal — it is a living part of Kurdish identity and natural inheritance, the quiet guardian of the forests.

You move through mist like memory,
your steps stir the breath of dawn.
In your eyes the forest dreams,
and in your silence the earth remembers peace.

## 🦌 2.21- Gewezin / Gewzinê Zagrosê / (گەوزن / گەوزنی زاگرۆس) — The Zagros Fallow Deer / The Blue Deer of Mesopotamia (Dama dama mesopotamica)

Delicate, elusive, and touched by ancient light, the **Gewezin** — the Zagros Fallow Deer of Kurdistan — is one of the rarest and most sacred creatures of the eastern mountains. Once, when the rivers ran wider and the oak forests grew deeper, the Gewezin wandered freely through the warm plains of **Ilam, Mehran, Dehloran, Badreh, Mandalî, Khanaqin, Xaneqîn, Kalar**, and the fertile basins stretching toward **Hawizeh Marshes**, **Khuzestan (Xoristan)**, the lower **Sirwan** valley, and even the northern edges of **Basra (Xerapê)**.
Today, only faint shadows of that great herd remain — yet the deer survives, quiet as breath, gentle as dawn.

The Gewezin stands 90–110 centimetres at the shoulder, its summer coat a soft reddish-gold scattered with white spots like sunlight filtered through leaves. In winter, it darkens into shades of earth and bark. The males grow magnificent, broad antlers shaped like open hands — ancient crowns worthy of the forgotten kings of the Zagros. Females, slender and soft-eyed, move through the tall grasses with a calm grace that belongs only to the oldest and purest forms of life.

It is a creature of half-wooded hills and river-fed plains, favouring the oak belts of **Ilam and Lorestan**, the tamarisk corridors near **Dez** and **Karkheh**, and the reed-filled wetlands where **Karun** and **Little Zab** breathe their last into the lowlands. At dawn and dusk, the Gewezin steps lightly into open meadows to graze on acorns, herbs, and young shoots. During the heat of the day, it disappears into shade, dissolving into the land like a whispered memory.
When startled, it flees with floating steps — hooves barely touching the earth, moving as if carried by wind rather than muscle.

The rut arrives with autumn's first cool breath. In the plains of **Ilam, Badreh**, and the oaken valleys of **Kermashan**, the males call out with deep, resonant voices that echo across the fields. Rivals step forward, antlers lowered, clashing in powerful yet ritualised battles whose rhythms are older than history. The victor gathers a small group of females and watches over them with fierce devotion.
In spring, after many quiet months of waiting, the doe gives birth to a single fawn touched with pale white spots. Hidden in long grasses, the newborn lies still as stone, its tiny heartbeat blending with the breathing earth. With time, it rises to follow its mother, learning the soft paths of the Zagros and the harmony that once shaped an entire world.

In the memory of Kurdistan and ancient Mesopotamia, the Gewezin appears again and again — carved on stone walls, painted on pottery, sung in the oldest tales. It was once the beloved animal of Ishtar, symbol of beauty, renewal, and the soft strength of life. In Kurdish folklore, it is the deer of longing and innocence, the quiet wanderer of sorrow and grace. Elders once said that to see a Gewezin at dawn was a blessing; to harm one was to wound the land itself.

Once plentiful, the Zagros Fallow Deer now survives only in scattered pockets near **Hawizeh**, **Dez**, **Ilam**, and along the borderlands of **Khuzestan** and **Lorestan**. War, overhunting, deforestation, and the loss of river plains pushed it to the brink of extinction. Today, careful conservation efforts are slowly returning it to the valleys it once ruled. But its survival remains fragile — a reminder that even the gentlest hearts can fade when their land grows silent.

You walk like a memory through the grass,
your steps soft as the breath of morning.
In your eyes the Zagros dreams once more,
and the earth remembers what it lost.

## 🦌 2.22- Xezal / Mamiz / Mênk / Mamiza Zagrosê

**(خەزاڵ / مامز / مێنک / مامزی زاگرۆس / بیرە مێری) — The Gazelle / The Goitered Gazelle of Kurdistan (Gazella subgutturosa)**

Elegant, alert, and timeless, the Kurdish Gazelle — known as **Bira Mîrî, Xezal, Xezala Kurdî, Xezala Zagrosî, Mênk, Mamiz, Mamiza Zagrosê** — is one of the most iconic and ancient mammals of the Zagros–Mesopotamian world.
Its many names reflect centuries of poetry and longing: Bira Mîrî evokes nobility and pride; Xezal is the classical word for gazelle, used in Kurdish songs to praise the beloved.

Standing 60–70 cm tall and weighing 20–30 kilograms, it wears the colours of the Kurdish plains — soft fawn, sandy gold, pale brown, with a shining white underside. A dark flank stripe, slender legs, and elegantly curved black horns give it a silhouette of quiet perfection. Its almond-shaped eyes — gentle, watchful, and full of ancient memory — make it one of the most adored animals in Kurdish culture.

The Kurdish Gazelle once ranged widely across **the heart of Kurdistan**.
It roamed freely through the **Khanaqin and Kifri plains, Garmian and Kirkuk lowlands, Sharazur basin, Makhmur plains, Mandalî, Ilam, Dehloran, Mehran, Badreh**, and the **Sirwan Basin**, reaching the warm belt stretching toward **Kermashan and the lower Zagros foothills**.
Its presence was recorded near the **foothills of Shingal**, and across the semi-desert steppe of Rojava — from **Derik, Tirbespî, and the Jazira belt** to **Girê Spî and the Kobanê borderlands**.
In older memories, it wandered as far as the **Hawizeh wetlands and plains near Xerapê (Basra)**, sharing space with wild asses and desert foxes.

A creature of open horizons, it prefers steppe, semi-desert valleys, shrub plains, and light grasslands — landscapes where distance and sky are its greatest protectors.

Moving like a breath of wind, the gazelle travels in herds of 3–20 animals.
Groups are often guided by an experienced female with sharp instincts. When danger appears, the herd performs **stotting** — high, bouncing leaps that signal strength and confuse predators. Feeding on grasses, herbs, acacia pods, and wild shrubs, the gazelle can survive harsh summers by extracting moisture from plants alone.

Breeding begins in late autumn or early winter, when males display elegant, ritualised dances and gentle horn contests. After five to six months, the mother gives birth to one or two fawns, hidden carefully under shrubs. The newborns remain silent and still for two weeks, their coats blending perfectly with dust and grass.
By one month, they walk with the herd, learning the ancient rhythm of the plains.

Across Kurdish poetry and song, the Bira Mîrî is a living metaphor of **beauty, purity, freedom, and belovedness**.
To call someone **çavê mênkê** — *"eyes of the gazelle"* — is among the highest praises.
Old bards sang:
**"Çavên te weke Bira Mîrî ye li ser çiya."**
*"Your eyes are like the gazelle's upon the hill."*
Many Kurdish tribes considered killing a gazelle without need a great dishonour, believing the Xezal carries **Xwedê's blessing** — divine beauty in motion.

Today, the Kurdish Gazelle has nearly vanished from much of its homeland.
Small populations survive in **Ilam, Mehran, Dehloran**, and parts of **Kermashan**, with scattered groups in **Rojava** and southern **Başûr**. Reintroduction projects continue in **Badreh** and **Dehloran**, but the species remains critically threatened by overhunting, habitat loss, fencing of migration routes, landmines, and pressure from livestock.

Conservationists now strive to rebuild the ecological corridors that once connected these plains — hoping that the swift prince of Kurdistan may one day return to its ancestral path.

O child of sunlight and wind,
swift prince of the golden plains —

the earth may forget your footprints,

but the Kurdish heart never forgets your passing:

bright, delicate, and forever free.

## 🐏2.23- Kele Kêwî/ Beranê Çiyayî / Beranê Zagrosê /Berane Kêwiye / Mere Bizne (کەڵە کێوی / بەرانێ چیایی / بەرانە زاگرۆسی / بەرانە کێویە/ مەڕەبزنە) — The Zagros Wild Sheep / The Mountain Ram of Kurdistan (Ovis orientalis gmelini)

Majestic, vigilant, and enduring, the **Beranê Çiyayî** — the Mountain Ram — is one of the oldest wild inhabitants of Kurdistan. With its spiralled horns and proud stance upon rocky ridges, it embodies the untamed heart of the Zagros. Also known as the Armenian Mouflon or Zagros Wild Sheep, it is the direct ancestor of modern domestic sheep, living proof of the ancient connection between Kurdish herders and the mountains that raised them.

The Beranê Çiyayî roams the highlands of **Shaho, Hawraman, Qandil, Bradost, Penjwen, Sirwan Basin, Amedi, Barzan, Rawanduz, Merîwan, Paveh, Ilam, Lorestan**, and the rugged massifs of **Hakkarî (Colemerg), Şirnex, and Botan**. Its presence across these mountains tells the story of coexistence — humans and wild rams drinking from the same springs for thousands of years.

Adult males stand about 90 cm at the shoulder and weigh up to 70 kilograms, their curved horns arching over 90 cm long, like crescents carved from the sky. Females are smaller, lighter, with shorter horns or none. Their coats turn reddish-brown in summer and grey-brown in winter, blending seamlessly with stone, sun, and snow.

The Mountain Ram lives on steep slopes, sheer cliffs, and alpine meadows between 1,000 and 3,000 metres, where the wind carries no sound except its hooves. It prefers open hillsides with wide views, relying on sharp eyesight and agility to evade wolves and leopards.
During the day, it grazes on grasses, herbs, and mountain shrubs; at dusk and dawn, it descends toward springs and narrow valleys to drink. Herds consist of females and young, while mature males form separate groups until the breeding season. Their leaps

between sharp rocks are breathtaking — paths so narrow and dangerous that no human can follow.

The rut begins in late autumn. Males clash in powerful horn battles, their strikes echoing across Shaho and Hawraman like drums of the old mountains. After 5–6 months of gestation, females give birth in April or May to one or two lambs. The newborns stand within minutes, following their mothers by the next day — a necessity for surviving cliff and predator alike. By the next year, young rams join bachelor herds while females stay within maternal lines, keeping the ancient family structures intact.

In Kurdish memory, the Beranê Çiyayî is sacred. Its image appears in old tribal crests and Newroz traditions. The word **beran** itself is ancient, echoing in hymns and shepherd songs as a symbol of bravery, honour, and spring's renewal. In some villages, ram horns hang above doorways for protection, and elders sing:
**"Beranê çiya, tu şêrê berfê yî."**
*"Ram of the mountain, you are the lion of the snow."*
Its body represents courage, its horns wisdom, its presence the continuity of life across the seasons of the mountains.

Once widespread, the Mountain Ram has declined sharply because of overhunting, habitat loss, and competition with livestock. Today, small but proud populations survive in **Shaho, Hawraman, Qandil, Bradost, Ilam, and the border highlands of Hakkarî and Şirnex**. Conservation efforts in both Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan seek to restore herds, protect breeding grounds, and reintroduce rams into secure reserves. The survival of this species is not only essential to mountain ecology but to Kurdish identity — a living symbol of resilience and heritage.

Climber of wind and stone,
your horns carry the echo of time.
When you look down from the cliffs,
the earth remembers its first shepherd.

## 🐐 2.24- Biz / Bizê Mâlê / Mêç / Bizin / Nêra Biz: Xez / Xiz / Nêri

## (خەز / نێری : نێرینەکەی / بز / بزن / مێچ) — The Goat — The Singer of the Rocks (Capra hircus)

The **Bizin**, the Kurdish goat, is one of the liveliest and most essential companions of Kurdish Mountain life — a creature that leaps where only the wind dares to go. It lives across all of Kurdistan, roaming the steep pastures of **Hewraman, Shaho, Qandil, Soran, Bradost, Amedi, Sidekan, Duhok, Akre, Barzan, Rawanduz, Penjwen**, and wandering freely among the rocky landscapes of **Colemêrg (Hakkarî), Şirnex, Botan, Amed, Mêrdîn, Riha, Semîsat, Bêdlês, Çewlîk, Meletî, Wan, Agrî, Qers, Erzingan, Erzerom, Artvîn, Arta, Bayburt**.
It grazes the open plains and rolling hills of **Garmiyan, Kalar, Kifri, Xaneqîn, Mandalî**, and fills the courtyards of countless villages in **Rojava — Afrin, Cindirês, Kobanê, Qamişlo, Derik**.
In Rojhilat, it is found from the orchards of **Sine, Ardalan, Merîwan, Paveh**, and the forests of **Kirmaşan, Xorawa (Khorramabad), Kewegle, Baxtiyarî**, all the way to the slopes around **Mahabad, Urmê (Urmia)** and the warm valleys of **Xoristan**.

Wherever there are rocks, sun, and wind, the Mêç finds a home.

Hardy, clever, and quick-footed, Kurdish goats thrive in places where no other livestock can survive. They climb jagged cliffs with ease, nibble on shrubs and wild herbs, and move in lively herds guided by **şivan** — the shepherds — and their loyal dogs. Curious and affectionate, goats often follow their owners as if they were old friends, nudging them gently with their horns or amusing them with playful mischief.

The Kurdish goat is slender and athletic, with long backward-curving horns and a soft beard that gives it a wise yet mischievous look. Its coat may be black, brown, white, smoky grey, or beautifully mixed — sometimes long and silky, used for weaving ropes,

bags, and traditional textiles. Their bright, restless eyes shine with intelligence, independence, and joy — the spark of the mountains themselves.

In spring, the mother goat (**mêçê mê / bizina mê**) gives birth to one or two kids (**mêçok / Karile**) after a five-month pregnancy. The newborns, barely hours old, begin hopping around the rocks like tiny dancers of the cliffs. Goat families return to the same high pastures year after year, following ancient grazing routes known only to shepherds and the wind. Their milk is treasured — thick, nutritious, and full of mountain flavour — becoming mast, penîr, rovî, and other essential foods of Kurdish village life.

In Kurdish culture, the Mêç is celebrated in songs and proverbs as a creature of joy, freedom, and resilience. Its bleating is said to echo through valleys like laughter, and many families see goats as a sign of abundance and blessing. Elders say:

**“Mêçê xweş, şevê xweş.”**
*“A happy goat brings a peaceful night.”*

To the Kurdish imagination, goats are spirits of the heights — guardians of rocky paths, singers of dawn, and givers of life.

*Child of the wind and stone,*
*you leap where no one dares —*
*your voice, a song of laughter,*
*your milk, the taste of the earth.*

## 🐏 2.25- Bêra / Pez / Mer û Beran ( بێرە / پەز / مەڕ و بەران) — The Sheep of Kurdistan

The **Bêra**, the Kurdish sheep, is the soft heartbeat of Kurdish pastoral life — a creature that has walked beside the Kurdish people since the earliest days of civilisation. It moves in gentle waves across the landscapes of Kurdistan, grazing the high summer pastures of **Hewraman, Shaho, Şax, Soran, Bradost, Amedi, Penjwen, Rawanduz, Qandil**, and the open meadows around **Wan, Agrî, Çewlîk (Bingöl), Dersim, Botan, Amed, Mêrdîn, Semîsat, Şirnex, Colemêrg (Hakkarî), Bêdlês, Erzingan, Erzerom, Qers, Arta, Bayburt, Artvîn**.
When winter arrives, the flocks descend to the mild lowlands of **Garmiyan, Kalar, Kifri, Xaneqîn, Mandalî**, and the river-fed plains of **Rojava — Afrin, Cindirês, Kobanê, Qamişlo, Derik**.
In Rojhilat, they roam the rolling hills of **Sine (Ardalan), Merîwan, Paveh, Asnav**, and the fertile valleys of **Kirmaşan, Xorawa (Khorramabad), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle, Xoristan**, and around **Mahabad, Urmê (Urmia)**.

Wherever Kurdish land stretches — from snowy mountains to desert edges — the Bêra travels with the rhythm of shepherds and seasons.

Sheep are calm, social, and guided by instinct. Kurdish herders know each animal by its face and bleat, calling them with whistles, songs, or soft tones only the flock understands. They move together like clouds drifting over the hills, always following a wise older ewe. Their days unfold beside **şivan** — shepherds — whose footsteps, dogs, and wooden flutes guide the flock from dawn until dusk.

The Bêra Kurdî is medium-sized with a warm, woolly coat that ranges from creamy white to brown or deep black. Its fleece grows thick in winter, a natural shield against mountain winds. Rams stand proudly with curved horns and strong necks, while ewes have gentle, compassionate eyes. Newborn lambs — soft as spring clouds — take their first steps within minutes, their tiny bells jingling like whispers of hope.

In late winter or early spring, the ewes give birth, filling villages with the music of bleating lambs — a sign that spring has arrived. The wool is sheared in early summer, spun by Kurdish hands into **clothing, blankets, carpets, socks, kilims**, and even the black **şepik** and white **şal û şepik** worn in traditional dress. For centuries, Kurdish tents and nomadic homes have been woven from the wool of these sheep.

The Bêra holds a sacred place in Kurdish culture. Its milk becomes **mast, penîr, rovî, do**, and its wool keeps families warm through harsh winters. In songs and tales, shepherds represent patience, humility, and harmony with nature — walking the ancient paths of their ancestors. Kurds say:

**“Li derê bêra, dilê mirovek aram e.”**
*“Where sheep graze, a person’s heart finds peace.”*

Sheep are part of Kurdish feasts, rituals, and moments of gratitude — symbols of abundance, generosity, and the cycle of life.

*Under the morning sun,*
*your bells echo through the valley —*
*white waves upon green hills,*
*the heartbeat of home.*

## 🦡 2.26- Bexê Rûsipî (بەخێ ڕووسپی) — The Eurasian Badger / The White-Faced Digger of Kurdistan (Meles meles canescens)

Strong, solitary, and quietly determined, the **Bexê Rûsipî** — the white-faced badger — is one of Kurdistan's most enduring night creatures. It moves with a slow confidence, emerging only under the moon, its steady steps echoing an ancient patience that has lived beneath these mountains for thousands of years.

The name combines **Bexê** (badger) and **rûsipî** (white-faced), perfectly describing its striking black-and-white striped head — a pattern as unique as a fingerprint. Its body is thick and powerful, covered in coarse grey fur, with dark legs and a broad, muscular frame built for life beneath the soil. Adults weigh 10–16 kilograms, measuring about 75 cm in body length, with short but astonishingly strong limbs shaped for digging into earth and stone.

The white-faced badger lives across all parts of Kurdistan. In **Southern Kurdistan**, it roams the forests and foothills of **Amedi, Barzan, Duhok, Zakho, Ranya, Penjwen, Garmiyan, Slemani, Kirkuk**, and the lower Zagros valleys. In **Eastern Kurdistan**, it thrives in the dense oak forests of **Hawraman, Shaho, Merîwan, Paveh, Bane, Piranshar, Mahabad, Urmia**, and stretching toward **Kirmashan and Ilam**. In **Northern Kurdistan**, it inhabits the rugged terrain of **Hakkarî (Colemerg), Şirnex, Botan, Amed, Bitlis, Wan (Van), Dersim, Bingol, Qers**, and all the way to the slopes of **Ararat (Agirî)**. In **Western Kurdistan**, it survives in quieter rural areas of **Afrin, Jindires, Raco, Derik**, and the farming belts around **Qamishlo**. Wherever oak trees grow and the earth is deep enough for a den, the Bexê Rûsipî finds its home.

It digs complex underground burrows known as **setts** — long tunnels with multiple chambers, sometimes passed down and expanded for generations. By day it sleeps deep in the earth, emerging at dusk to walk through orchards, fields, and riverbanks. Its diet is broad and adaptable: earthworms, insects, fruits, roots, small rodents, fallen

nuts, and occasionally eggs. In autumn, it fattens itself for winter, entering a state of semi-hibernation during the coldest months.

Although strong, the badger is exceptionally clean — creating separate toilet pits near the sett and lining sleeping chambers with fresh leaves. Villagers often spot its slow, steady shape crossing paths after midnight or hear it digging among fig and oak roots in the silence of the night.

Breeding takes place in late summer, but the female delays embryo implantation — a rare and remarkable survival strategy. The young are born underground in **February–April**, usually 2–4 cubs, blind at birth and dependent on their mother's warmth. After a month their eyes open, and by early summer they begin to explore near the sett, learning to dig, forage, and listen to the movements of the earth. Family groups may stay together for years, forming small clans in the same long-lived sett.

In Kurdish folklore, the Bexê Rûsipî is a creature of determination and quiet wisdom — the underground architect of the mountains. Elders say:
**"Baxê rûsipî bi xwe jî xane dike."**
*"The white-faced one builds his own home."*
To farmers, it symbolises patience and protection, the animal that "knows where the water sleeps" and brings fertility to the land by turning the soil. Its striped face even inspired certain Kurdish weaving patterns, representing balance between night and day.

Although still widespread, the Bexê Rûsipî faces dangers: deforestation, expanding roads, poisoned bait, and conflict near farms. Yet conservationists remind villagers that badgers help the land — aerating soil, reducing pests, and protecting crops naturally by keeping rodent populations balanced. Protecting its ancient setts means protecting the quiet engineers of Kurdish mountains.

*Digger of dreams,*
*you shape the earth's breath.*
*In the dark you labour softly,*
*and the soil remembers your hands.*

## 🦡 2.27- Fîsos / Fîsosê Kurdistanê (فسۆسی کوردستان / فسۆس) — The Striped Skunk — The Black and White Sentinel of the Night (Mephitis mephitis)

The **Fîsos**, known in Kurdish villages as the fearless little night-creature, is one of the most unmistakable animals of the Zagros foothills — a small, sturdy mammal with a dark body marked by white streaks that shine under the moon. Its thick, glossy fur and proud, bushy tail give it a bold appearance, but its true power lies in its ancient defence: a sharp, musky spray released from beneath its tail, a warning no predator forgets.

Kurdish elders say:
**“Fîsos ne trsê — çimkî kerestî bergirê xwe pê ye.”**
*“The Fisos fears nothing, for it carries its own weapon.”*

The Fîsos lives in warm, semi-open lands, once common across the western Zagros valleys and still lingering rarely in the wild edges of **Amedi, Duhok, Zakho, Şirnex, Garzan, Botan**, and scattered pockets stretching toward **Wan (Urmê), Kirmashan, Ilam, and Xoristan’s oak forests**. It prefers dry riverbeds, stony orchards, and grassy fields where it can dig burrows or claim abandoned fox dens.

A creature of dusk and darkness, it steps out only when the sky grows soft. It walks slowly but boldly — a tiny general inspecting his kingdom. It feeds on beetles, crickets, frogs, fallen fruit, and the occasional lizard, often roaming along irrigation canals or fig gardens. Despite its reputation, the Fîsos keeps itself clean, often washing its face and paws at streams before returning to its hidden den.

In the ecosystem, the Fîsos plays a vital role. It controls insects, locusts, and crop-eating pests, and cleans the land of decaying remains, earning it unexpected respect among farmers who once considered it a nuisance. Its quiet work keeps the nights healthier than most people realise.

In early spring the mother gives birth to four to six tiny kits inside a warm underground chamber lined with dry grass. Blind and hairless at first, they soon grow a coat of soft

black fur with faint white lines. As they grow stronger, they follow their mother in a neat line, each with its little tail raised proudly — a miniature parade of courage.

In Kurdish folklore, the Fîsos stands for self-protection, dignity, and the wisdom of avoiding unnecessary fights. Parents tell their children:
**“Ji Fîsos fêr bibe ka merî ne bê şerr jî xwe diparêze.”**
*“Learn from the Fisos how to protect yourself without fighting.”*

Its appearance is rare today. Many villagers believe it has nearly vanished, driven away by shrinking habitats, roads, and hunting. Yet whispers of survival remain — a glimpse near a vineyard, a scent by a river, a set of pawprints in dusty soil in the hills of **Amedi or Ilam**. And wherever it still walks, it remains a quiet, humble guardian of the night.

*Silent step, proud tail,*
*the moon bends to your courage —*
*little Fîsos,*
*the night’s humble hero.*

## 🦔 2.28- Pelak / Pêlak / Çûşik /Cûşik (چوشک / جوشک / پەڵەک) — The European Hedgehog / The Hedgehog of Kurdistan (Erinaceus europaeus)

Small, humble, and full of quiet charm, the **Pelak** — the hedgehog — is one of Kurdistan's most endearing animals. Moving softly through the twilight, it searches for food among grass, orchards, and stones, its tiny snout twitching and its spines rustling like dry leaves. When danger comes, it curls into a perfect ball — a small fortress of patience, protection, and ancient wisdom.

It measures 25–30 cm and weighs 600–1200 grams, gaining weight in autumn and thinning during spring. More than five thousand flexible spines cover its back — a living shield — while beneath the armour lies a gentle creature with soft brown fur, black eyes, and a pointed nose that can sense insects hidden under soil. Slow but determined, the Pelak often travels several kilometres each night, quietly exploring meadows and villages under the moon.

The hedgehog lives in every part of Kurdistan. In **Southern Kurdistan**, it wanders the orchards of **Slemani, Qaradax, Garmian, Kalar, Duhok, Zakho, Amedi, Barzan, Ranya, Penjwen, Kirkuk, Hewlêr**, and the warm plains stretching toward **Garmaser**. In **Eastern Kurdistan**, it thrives in **Hawraman, Shaho, Merîwan, Paveh, Mahabad, Piranshar, Urmia, Kirmashan, Ilam**, and the oak valleys of **Lorestan**. In **Northern Kurdistan**, it roams the foothills and farmland of **Amed, Mêrdîn, Botan, Hakkarî (Colemerg), Şirnex, Bitlis, Qers, Wan (Van), Bingol**, and up to the lower slopes of **Ararat (Agirî)**. In **Western Kurdistan**, it is common in rural zones of **Afrin, Cindirês, Raco, Kobanê, Manbij, Qamislo, Amûdê**, and along the wheat fields near **Derik**. Where nights are quiet and insects plentiful, the Pelak leaves its tiny footprints.

During the day it sleeps in a nest of leaves hidden beneath bushes or logs. At dusk it wakes and begins to forage for beetles, worms, larvae, slugs, and occasionally berries or eggs. Its presence is a gift to farmers, for hedgehogs keep pests in balance naturally.

When winter deepens, it curls into a hidden burrow and enters a deep sleep, slowing its heartbeat until spring sunlight warms the land again.

Breeding begins in late spring. After about 35 days, the female gives birth to 4–6 tiny hoglets in a soft grass-lined nest. They are born blind and pink, their spines still soft beneath the skin. Within days, the spines harden; within weeks, their eyes open. The mother protects them fiercely, guiding them until they can forage alone. By six to eight weeks, they begin their first adventures beneath the moon, learning the ways of the night.

In Kurdish village culture, the Pelak is a creature of affection and respect, called **berîzoka şevê** — *the night visitor*. Farmers consider its presence a blessing, believing it keeps the land fertile and free of harmful insects. A Kurdish saying teaches:
**“Pelak xwe dizane çon biparêze.”**
*“The hedgehog knows how to protect itself.”*
Children grow up hearing stories of a clever hedgehog who defeats snakes and escaping foxes not with strength, but with patience and strategy.

Though still widespread, the Pelak faces danger from pesticides, habitat loss, and busy roads. Conservationists encourage villagers to keep small pathways open under fences and leave patches of wild grass where hedgehogs can shelter. To protect the Pelak is to preserve the gentle poetry of Kurdish nights — the rustle of peace in the garden.

*Little wanderer of dusk,*
*you carry the stars upon your back.*
*Each step is a whisper,*
*each rustle a prayer of peace.*

## 🦔 2.29- Tîrpel / Tîrpela Zagrosê (تیرپەل / تیرپەلی زاگرۆس) —The Porcupine of Kurdistan (Hystrix indica)

Silent, solitary, and ancient, the **Tîrpel** — the Crested Porcupine — walks the Kurdish night like a small armoured traveller. It is neither hunter nor easy prey. When threatened, it does not flee; instead it turns, bristles, and stands unshaken — a living fortress of quills beneath the moon. Among Kurdistan's wildlife, the Tîrpel is unmistakable: measuring 70–90 cm in length and weighing 10–18 kilograms, its body carries hundreds of sharp, hollow quills — some reaching 30 cm — which rise like white lightning when danger nears. A long crest of black and white bristles runs along its neck and back, giving it a noble, almost mythic silhouette. Its eyes are small, but its hearing and smell guide it through darkness with quiet certainty.

The Tîrpel lives across **southern, eastern, and western Kurdistan**, especially throughout **Hawraman, Shaho, Kermashan, Ilam, Khanaqin, Mandali, Badra, Mehran, Tuz Khurmatu, Kirkuk, Garmian, and the semi-desert valleys stretching toward Rojava around Hesekê, Amûdê, Qamishlo, Derik, and the dry plains approaching Shingal**. These are lands of rocky slopes, scattered shrubs, abandoned burrows, and old fig orchards — ideal homes for this quiet night-wanderer.

Nocturnal and vegetarian, the Tîrpel feeds on roots, bulbs, fallen fruits, grains, and the bark of young trees. It digs with strong claws and sharp teeth, leaving behind conical pits that farmers instantly recognise. At dusk, families emerge from their burrows to forage side-by-side, moving slowly but purposefully along familiar paths. When threatened, the porcupine stamps its feet, raises its crest, and shakes its tail quills to produce a rattling warning — and if pressed further, it charges backward into danger with remarkable courage.

Breeding usually takes place in late winter. After a long gestation of about 110 days, the female gives birth to 2–4 young in a deep burrow. The babies are born soft and blind, with flexible quills that harden within days. Unusual among rodents, both parents share

in protecting and raising their young. The family remains together until the next breeding season, and by six months the juveniles are independent, ready to roam the night with their own armour of thorns.

In Kurdish folklore, the Tîrpel embodies the wisdom of defence — the belief that strength lies not in aggression but in patience, endurance, and knowing when to stand firm. Shepherds often say: *"Tîrpelê bê deng, lê xwe diparêze"* — *"The silent porcupine still protects itself."* Its quills were once used by Kurdish artisans for writing or decoration, and some mountain tribes believed they carried protective power against misfortune. In old tales, the Tîrpel was even said to guard underground springs and hidden relics, its burrows leading into the secret heart of the earth.

The Crested Porcupine remains fairly widespread across Kurdistan, yet it faces threats from hunting, road accidents, and shrinking habitat. Some farmers kill it when it digs near crops, though in truth its burrowing helps aerate the soil and spread seeds, quietly healing the land. Protecting the Tîrpel means protecting the ancient balance of the Kurdish hills — where every night brings the timeless rhythm of creatures who survive by wisdom, not war.

Knight of the thorns,
you walk without fear or haste;
even in silence you speak,
and your armour is your peace.

## 🐾 2.30- Kûrê Çiya / Kûrê Zagrosê / Kûrikê Berdan

## (کووریێ چیا / کووریێ زاگرۆس / کوورکێ بەردان) — The Rock Hyrax / The Mountain Hyrax of Kurdistan (Procavia capensis)

Small, cautious, and full of quiet intelligence, the **Kûrê Çiya** is one of the most surprising and ancient residents of Kurdistan's rocky mountains. To see one sunning itself on a boulder at dawn is to glimpse a living fossil — a survivor from an age older than the great mammals of today, a creature whose ancestors walked these stones before the first herders climbed these hills.

Measuring only 40–50 cm in length and weighing 3–5 kilograms, the Kûrê Çiya looks humble but is astonishingly well adapted to its world. Its rounded body, short legs, and thick brown-grey fur blend perfectly with mountain stone. Its bright eyes and trembling whiskers give it a curious, alert expression, while rubber-like foot pads let it cling effortlessly to vertical rock walls. This small animal is made of stone and sunlight — shaped by cliffs, raised by heat.

The Kûrê Çiya inhabits the **Zagros foothills, dry cliffs, and rocky escarpments of Hawraman, Shaho, Amedi, Bradost, Rawanduz, Ranya, Hakkarî (Colemerg), Şirnex, Botan, Qandil**, and the hot low-slopes stretching toward **Khanaqin, Kifri, Kalar, and the Ilam–Lorestan belt**. It lives in colonies of 10–20 animals, hiding among cracks and crevices; one sentry always stands on the highest rock, watching the valley below. At the faintest sign of danger, it lets out a piercing squeak, sending the colony diving into the stone.

Diurnal and deeply social, the hyrax spends mornings basking in warm sunlight and afternoons resting in the shade. Its voice is a mix of chirps, trills, and soft calls that echo through the cliffs — a mountain language older than memory. It eats leaves, bark, fruits, and grasses, its complex stomach allowing it to survive in the driest, harshest rocks where few other animals could endure.

Breeding happens once a year, usually in spring. After a surprisingly long gestation of 7–8 months, the female gives birth to 2–4 young inside the safety of the den. The newborns are fully furred and active within hours, scrambling up small rocks with remarkable skill. The colony cares for the young together: older females act as guardians and teachers, grooming the babies, warming them, watching the sky. A true society of cliffs, bound by cooperation and gentle vigilance.

In Kurdish tradition, the Kûrê Çiya was once seen as a symbol of community and protection. Mountain villagers said:
**“Kûrê çiya biçûk e, lê çiyayê mezin diparêze.”**
*“The little one of the mountain guards the great mountain.”*
Its presence near springs, shrines, or old hermit caves was considered a good omen — a sign that the land was clean, untouched, and watched over. In ancient Near Eastern texts, the hyrax appears as a creature of wisdom, living safely in the rocks, knowing the secret ways of the mountains.

Today, the Kûrê Çiya survives in scattered colonies across northern and eastern Kurdistan. It faces threats from quarrying, habitat disturbance, road blasting, and predators such as foxes, eagles, and snakes. Yet its shy nature and remote cliff homes have kept it safer than many other species. Protecting the rocky slopes of Kurdistan — from **Hawraman to Amedi, from Qandil to Hakkarî** — is the key to ensuring the survival of this small, ancient guardian of stone.

Small keeper of the cliffs,
you stand where silence begins.
The mountain listens when you call,
and the wind carries your wisdom.

## 🦫 2.31- Kûteleya Rûbarê / Kûtelei Awê / Kûteleya Çemê / Kûteleya Kûteleya Kurdistanê ( کووتەڵەی ڕووبار / کووتەڵەی ئاوێ / کووتەڵەی چەم / کووتەڵەی کوردستان) — The Eurasian Beaver — The Lost River Engineer of Kurdistan (Castor fiber)

Once a quiet architect of the Kurdish rivers, the **Kûteleya Rûbarê** — “River Round” in old Kurdish — shaped wetlands, streams, and floodplains across Kurdistan for thousands of years. With its powerful teeth, webbed feet, and mastery of water, it was a builder of life, a keeper of balance, and one of the most important animals ever to live along the rivers of the Zagros.

Elders in **Hawraman, Shaho, Sirwan, Little Zab (Zêbûkê), Ranya, Qala Diza, Dukan, Kifri, Khanaqin**, and along the marsh edges near **Kirmashan** still recall stories of a water-dwelling creature that felled trees, diverted rivers, and built dams of mud and wood — the long-gone Kûteleya Rûbarê.

It once lived throughout all four parts of Kurdistan — **Bakur** along the Tigris tributaries near Amed and Botan, **Başûr** along Sirwan, Lesser Zab and the lakes of Slemani, **Rojhilat** along Kirmashan’s rivers and the Zagros foothill springs, and **Rojava** in pockets of wetlands near Serêkaniyê and the Khabur Basin. Wherever willows grew and cold water ran, the beaver left its mark.

The adult measured nearly 1 metre including the tail and weighed up to 25 kilograms. Its flat tail served as paddle and anchor; its large orange teeth shaped wood like a craftsman’s tools; and its dense brown fur kept it warm in icy streams — once prized by traders in Amed, Kirkuk, and Mosul.

A vegetarian and master engineer, the Kûteleya Rûbarê fed on willow bark, leaves, reeds, and roots. But its true legacy was its dam-building: slowing river flow, storing water for summer, creating ponds where fish, frogs, birds, and buffalo thrived. For

ancient Kurdish farmers, these ponds were blessings — living reservoirs built not by men, but by the humble river beaver.

Beavers lived in family groups of 4–6 members, fiercely loyal and monogamous. Each spring, after about 105 days of gestation, the female gave birth to 2–4 kits inside a hidden lodge accessible only from underwater. The young stayed with their parents for two years, learning the craft of dam-building — one of the longest childhoods of any mammal in Kurdistan.

In Kurdish tradition, the Kûteleya Rûbarê was a guardian of rivers — the one who "tamed the floods" and "kept the waters alive."
Villagers said:
**"Kûteleya Rûbarê, avê xwe dizane."**
*"The beaver knows its own water."*
Its presence was a sign of purity; its disappearance was a warning that the river was sick. Its fur and teeth were once traded, but by the early 1900s hunting, dam destruction, and shrinking wetlands erased it from most of Kurdistan.

Today, the species survives only in small pockets of **eastern Turkey, northern Iran, and the Caucasus**. Some Zagros environmentalists propose reintroducing it to the Sirwan Basin, Hawraman canyons, and the Lesser Zab valley — places where its dams could help restore wetlands, raise groundwater, and soften the harsh effects of summer drought.

Its story is a reminder of an ancient relationship between rivers, people, and animals — a time when the land was shaped not only by hands, but by paws and teeth working in harmony with water.

Builder of quiet water,
your hands shaped the flow of time.
Now your rivers dream of your return,
and the stones remember your dams.

## 🦦 2.32- Segaw / Sagaw / Sîgaw / Segawê Avê / Segawê Zagrosê

## (سەگاو / سیگاو / سەگاوی ئاو / سەگاوی زاگرۆس) — The Eurasian Otter / The Water Guardian of the Mountains (Lutra lutra)

Sleek, playful, and deeply tied to the beating heart of flowing water, the **Segaw** — the Kurdish river otter — is one of the most magical and elusive creatures of Kurdistan. Moving like a silver shadow between reeds and stones, it glides through rivers with a beauty that feels almost otherworldly. Villagers who live along the Sirwan or Little Zab rivers often say that the Segaw is "the smile of the stream," for wherever it appears, life in the water seems brighter.

This graceful creature measures 90–120 cm including its strong, tapering tail, and weighs up to 10 kilograms. Its fur is among the richest in the animal kingdom: dense, oily, waterproof — dark chocolate brown above, fading to a soft silver-white underbelly. Its eyes sparkle with curiosity, intelligence, and mischief, a gaze that has enchanted shepherds and fishermen from **Qandil, Hawraman, Shaho, Merîwan, and Rojhilat's Zagros valleys**, to the riverbanks of **Garmian, Ranya, Dukan, Qaladze, Sirwan, and Derbendî Xelef**, and throughout **Rojava's Khabur, Afrin, and Serêkaniyê** waterways. Wherever there is clean, living water in Kurdistan, the Segaw may be silently watching from beneath the roots.

The Segaw is a wanderer of rivers. It inhabits springs, mountain streams, lakes, and wetlands — from the icy waters of **Hakkarî and Çiyayê Agirî (Ararat)** to the lush riverbeds of **Khanaqin and Hewlêr**, sliding gracefully along the stones. Highly territorial, it can travel many kilometres in a single night, marking the riverbanks with scent to announce its presence. It swims with astonishing power and elegance, pushing itself forward with webbed feet and a muscular tail, able to remain underwater for more than a minute before surfacing silently like a whisper of the river itself. Its diet is varied: fish, frogs, crabs, small birds, and even mammals. At dawn or dusk, when

light softens and the wind rests, villagers sometimes see it sliding down muddy riverbanks — not for hunting, but for pure joy.

Otters can breed at any time of year, but most cubs are born in spring after a two-month gestation. The mother gives birth to two or three cubs in a hidden den near the water, often tucked beneath tree roots or in an old burrow abandoned by another animal. The cubs stay underground for several weeks, blind and helpless, warmed by her fur. When they reach ten weeks, she begins their first swimming lessons — nudging them gently into the river, circling them with soft calls, teaching them the art of water. The family stays together through summer, playing, hunting, and learning, until the young drift into independence in autumn.

In Kurdish tradition, the Segaw is a symbol of purity, joy, and the life of rivers. Many call it **"sega avê"** — "the dog of the water" — not as an insult, but as a title of loyalty and guardianship. Elders once believed that the otter kept rivers alive, driving away sickness and stagnation. A Kurdish saying carries this belief:

**"Segaw di nav avê de diqesîne — ew jiyanê dide avê."**
*"The otter dances in the water — it gives life to the stream."*

Old stories describe it as a shape-shifter guiding lost souls along river paths in moonlight, its glowing fur a gentle lantern for the wandering heart.

But like many of Kurdistan's wild spirits, the Segaw has suffered. Pollution, damming, shrinking rivers, and overfishing have pushed it toward rarity. It survives today mainly in the remote waters of **Sirwan, Qandil, Hawraman, Rojhilat's Zagros springs, the Little Zab**, and a few untouched stretches in **Rojava**. Yet conservation groups in the Kurdistan Region have begun protecting it, studying its return, and restoring clean waterways. To save the Segaw is to save the rivers — and to save the rivers is to save the life of the mountains.

*Child of the silver water,*
*you write laughter upon the stream.*

*Where you swim, the river sings,*

*and the earth remembers to smile.*

## 🦦 2-33- Dellek / Dallek / Dêllek / Guhendarê Şevê / Guhendarê Çiyayî (دەڵەك / دەلەک / گوهەندەرەی شەو / گوهەندەرەی چیایی) — The Stone Marten / The Night Wanderer of the Mountains (Martes foina)

The **Dellek**, the Stone Marten of Kurdistan, is one of the land's most secretive and enchanting night wanderers — a creature that moves between forest shadows and the stone walls of ancient villages with cat-like grace and weasel-like curiosity. Its slender body, pointed muzzle, and glossy fur give it an appearance both elegant and mischievous. Across its chest lies a distinct white crescent, shining like a moon fragment, and its dark eyes glimmer with the alert intelligence of a wild spirit that has learned to survive beside humans without ever belonging to them. Its coat is rich brown above and cream-white below, smooth like silk when touched by early morning light. With its long, bushy tail balancing every leap, the Dellek dances between branches, rocks, and rooftops as though the night itself carries it forward.

This elusive mammal lives in many corners of Kurdistan. In **Southern Kurdistan**, it is found around **Amedi, Barzan, Hakkarî borderlands, Rawanduz, Bradost, Penjwen, Slemani, Garmian, and the Zagros foothills**. In **Eastern Kurdistan**, it roams the forests of **Merîwan, Paveh, Hawraman Takht, Bane, Shino, Mahabad, Urmia, and Kirmashan**. In **Northern Kurdistan**, it moves through the old orchards and ruins of **Amed, Botan, Bitlis, Wan (Van), Şirnak, Colemerg (Hakkarî), Dersim, and Agirî**. In **Rojava**, it appears in quieter areas around **Afrin, Jindires, Raco, Serêkaniyê, and Derik**. Wherever stone villages meet mountain forests, the Dellek is at home.

It prefers rocky slopes, oak forests, and abandoned stone terraces, yet it often wanders close to human homes. At dusk, when the first stars appear, the Dellek begins its rounds — stepping lightly along garden walls, slipping through fig orchards, and exploring the rafters of barns where warmth and mice gather. It hunts rodents, birds, eggs, insects, and snakes, and it is especially fond of fruits. Farmers in **Hawraman, Amedi, and Rawanduz** tell stories of Delleks stealing grapes, mulberries, or walnuts

with astonishing cleverness, leaving only a rustle in the leaves as proof. Despite its shy nature, it is adaptable, able to live in mountain caves, hollow trees, shepherd huts, and even the ruins of old Kurdish homes where nature has begun reclaiming the stones.

The Dellek mates in late summer, but the female delays the embryo's development — an unusual biological miracle that allows her to give birth when spring arrives and food becomes plentiful. In April or May she delivers 3–5 tiny kits, blind and soft as smoke. Within weeks they begin to climb, tumble, and chase each other around the den, learning survival through play under their mother's quiet, watchful discipline. By summer's end, they follow her across branches and walls, absorbing the secret pathways of the forest.

In Kurdish stories, the Dellek is admired for its intelligence, agility, and mysterious nature. Many say, **"Dellek naxewîte be xofe"** — *"The Dellek never runs without reason."* Some see it as a protector of orchards, keeping snakes and rats away; others call it the gentle thief of fruit. In mountain villages, harming a Dellek was once believed to bring winter misfortune, while seeing one near a house was taken as a sign of abundance and healthy trees.

Although still present across Kurdistan, the Dellek faces dangers: deforestation, expanding roads, hunting, and the old trade in marten fur. Yet more people today recognize its importance for balancing ecosystems, and small efforts to protect its habitat are slowly taking root. As long as the forests still breathe and the stone houses still stand beneath moonlight, the Dellek will continue its silent journey through Kurdistan's nights.

*Moonlight on the wall,*
*a shadow slips between fig leaves.*
*Eyes of fire, feet of silence —*
*the Dellek passes, unseen but eternal.*

## 🐾 2.34- Şîşol / Şîşolê Kurdistanê (شیشۆڵی کوردستان / شیشۆڵ) — The Grey Mongoose — The Snake-Killer of Kurdistan (Herpestes edwardsii kurdistanica)

The **Şîşol**, known in Kurdish villages as **Şîsok**, is the fearless little hunter of Kurdistan's plains — a slender, sharp-eyed creature that moves like a streak of grey fire through dry grass and rocky lowlands. Its body is long and flexible, its legs short but quick, its pointed face always alert, and its bushy tail almost as long as the body itself. Its fur — speckled grey, brown, and silver — blends perfectly with the sun-burnt hillsides of **Hewlêr (Erbil), Kirkuk, Kifri, Neynawa (Mosul), Diyala, Garmiyan, Mandalî, Xaneqîn, Jalawla**, and the semi-arid plains stretching toward **Kermashan, Sine, Mahabad, Urmê (Urmia), Baxtiyari, Xorawa (Khorramabad)**, and the warmer edges of **Xoristan (Khuzestan)**.
Where farmland meets wilderness, Şîşol walks like a silent guardian.

Light, swift, and impossibly brave, the Şîsok is one of the few animals on earth that can confront and kill venomous snakes — even fast-striking vipers. Its reflexes are lightning-quick: a blur of motion, a sudden leap, a sharp bite to the skull. Partially resistant to venom and armed with instinctive strategy, the Şîşol has earned deep respect among Kurdish farmers, who often say it is "the little warrior of the fields." In the heat of day, when most animals hide, the mongoose can be seen darting between stone fences, scanning wheat fields, or exploring dry riverbeds in search of prey.

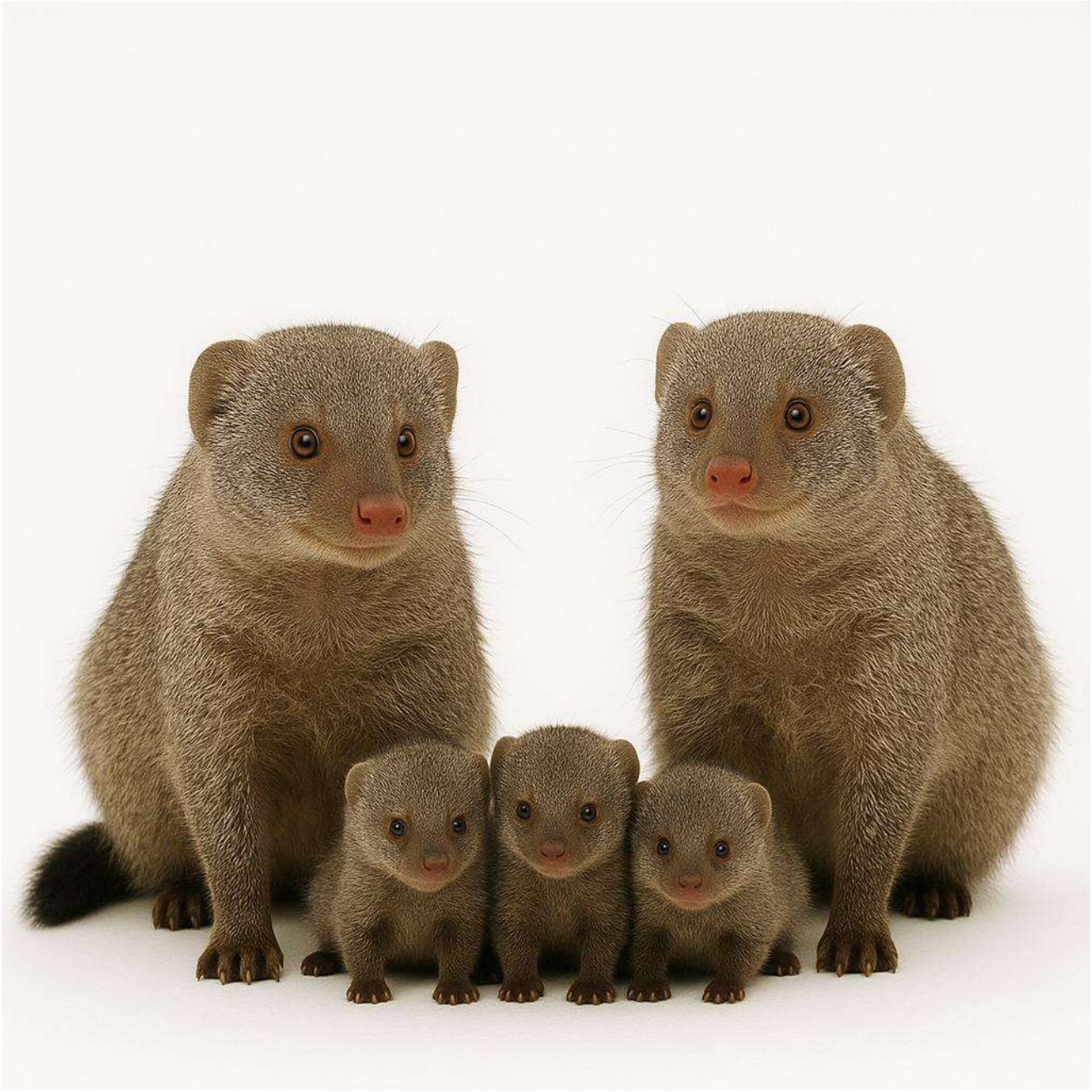
It lives in burrows — sometimes digging its own, sometimes taking over old fox or rabbit dens. When threatened, the Şîşol arches its back, raises its fur, and hisses sharply, making itself appear twice its size. Despite its small frame, it fears nothing.
Its courage is woven into Kurdish folklore. Elders say that the Şîsok has **more bravery than its body can hold**, and in old times, people believed that keeping a mongoose tooth brought protection from snakebite — a reflection of how deeply this animal is tied to survival and safety.

The Şîşol is not only a snake-hunter but also an essential part of Kurdistan's ecology. It feeds on **snakes, lizards, rodents, insects**, and sometimes birds or eggs, helping farmers by controlling pests that threaten crops or livestock. It also eats fruit and roots, spreading seeds across fields and hillsides. For this reason, many Kurdish farmers consider it a quiet friend to the land.

In the safety of hidden burrows, the female gives birth to **2–4 young**, tiny and blind at first. They stay with their mother for many months, learning to stalk, leap, and hunt by copying her every move. Unlike many small carnivores, mongooses often live in small family groups — sharing dens, grooming one another, and defending territory together with surprising unity.

Though still found across much of Kurdistan, the Şîşol faces threats from **habitat loss, expanding farmland, poisoned rodents**, and increasing road accidents. Yet it remains resilient, adapting to village edges and abandoned fields, surviving through intelligence and courage — the qualities Kurds admire most in this small warrior.

Swift shadow of courage,
you strike before fear can speak —
the whisper of grass hides
a hunter's heart.



## 🐾 2.35- Serbêkê Zagrosî (سەر بێکەی زاگرۆس) — The Maned Polecat / The Steppe Hunter of Kurdistan (Vormela peregusna).

Quick, elusive, and brave beyond its size, the **Serbêkê Zagrosî** is one of Kurdistan's least-known but most fascinating carnivores. Its body is long and sleek, with short legs and a bold pattern of stripes and spots across its fur — a small creature dressed in the colours of defiance.
Belonging to the weasel family (Mustelidae), it is a close relative of the ferret and stoat, yet far more dramatic in behaviour. When threatened, it arches its back, raises its mane, and puffs its tail into a spiky plume, hissing and lunging fearlessly at enemies many times its size.
Adults measure about 30–35 cm in body length, with a 15–20 cm tail, and weigh 500–700 grams. Their fur is dense and soft, golden-brown with black and white markings, and a distinctive dark "mask" across the face — the look of a tiny mountain bandit.

The Serbêkê Zagrosî lives in dry plains, rocky steppes, and open hillsides across eastern, southern, and western Kurdistan, especially in **Garmian, Kirkuk lowlands, Khanaqin, Kifri, Tuz Khurmatu, Dehloran, Mehran, Ilam, Kermashan, Shaho, Sirwan Basin**, and the hot foothills reaching toward **Hawraman and Hakkarî**. It shelters in abandoned rodent holes, stone walls, old burrows, and cracks among boulders, emerging only when the sun has set.

A nocturnal and highly active predator, it feeds on rodents, birds, lizards, insects, and sometimes eggs. Its long, flexible body lets it chase prey deep into tunnels, and its sharp claws and teeth make it a formidable hunter despite its small size. When alarmed, it releases a powerful musky scent — a natural shield — and performs a dramatic defensive display, sometimes standing upright like a defiant little warrior. Though fierce, it plays an essential ecological role by controlling rodent populations and maintaining balance across Kurdistan's steppe lands.

Breeding occurs in late winter or early spring. After a gestation of 40–45 days, the female gives birth to 3–8 kits in a hidden burrow or sheltered rock cavity. The newborns are blind and hairless, gaining their striped fur within weeks. By two months, they explore the world and begin learning to hunt through play. The family stays together through summer, after which the young disperse to claim their own territories along the dry valleys and hill slopes.

In Kurdish village lore, the Serbêkê Zagrosî is admired for its courage and cleverness. Shepherds say:
**“Bi mişkê wê, şêr jî diqise.”**
*“Before her scent, even a lion hesitates.”*
Villagers call it **pîsê serbêk** — *“the fearless cat”* — a symbol of dignity and defence. Though small, it never bows to danger, making it a beloved metaphor for bravery in the face of huge challenges.

Rare and declining in many parts of its range due to habitat loss, poisoning campaigns against rodents, shrinking food sources, and road accidents, the Serbêkê Zagrosî survives today mainly in **Garmian, Shaho, Sirwan Valley, Ilam, and the eastern plains touching Hawraman and Hakkarî**. Its future depends on protecting these dry, rocky landscapes where it plays the role of nature’s own pest controller.

Striped shadow of the steppe,
you dance where silence hunts.
Small in size, vast in spirit —
a whisper of courage beneath the moon.

## 🐿️ 2.36- Simore (سمۆرە) — The Eurasian Red Squirrel / The Forest Acrobat of Kurdistan (Sciurus vulgaris)

Quick, bright, and full of energy, the **Simore** — the Red Squirrel — is one of the liveliest spirits of Kurdistan's forests. From sunrise to sunset, it leaps through branches like a flicker of fire dancing among the green. With its graceful tail and sharp, curious eyes, it brings movement, colour, and mischief to every oak grove and pine hillside.

The Simore is a small forest-dwelling mammal, 20–25 cm in body length with a 15–20 cm tail, and weighing 300–400 grams. Its coat changes with the seasons — fiery red or golden in summer, deep brown in winter, and sometimes silvery-grey in the colder mountains. Its long, bushy tail acts like a balancing sail as it jumps tree to tree, while its tufted ears give it an elfin, magical charm.

The Simore is found in oak, walnut, and pine forests across the whole of Kurdistan. In **Southern Kurdistan**, it thrives around **Amedi, Barzan, Rawanduz, Penjwen, Sharbazher, Halgurd, Qandil, Duhok, Zakho, Akre, Ranya, Slemani, Hawraman**, and the Zagros foothills. In **Eastern Kurdistan**, it lives in the wooded mountains of **Shaho, Merîwan, Paveh, Hawraman Takht, Sine, Kirmashan, Ilam, Lorestan**, reaching the walnut valleys of **Piranshar** and the forests above **Mahabad**. In **Northern Kurdistan**, it inhabits the highlands of **Amed, Botan, Şirnex, Hakkarî (Colemerg), Wan (Van), Bitlis, Bingol, Dersim, Qers, and Agirî (Ararat)**. In **Western Kurdistan**, it appears in the remaining oak belts of **Afrin, Raco, Cindirês**, and the mountain-fringe orchards near **Kobanê and Derik**.
Wherever old oak forests grow, the Simore is their little guardian.

It spends nearly all its life in the treetops, rarely touching the ground except to hide nuts or gather fallen treasure. Its diet consists of acorns, walnuts, pine seeds, fruits, fungi, and sometimes insects. The Simore is famous for storing food — burying nuts in many small caches across the forest. Many of these hidden seeds are never recovered, sprouting into new trees. In this way, the Simore becomes an unseen forester of

Kurdistan, planting the next generation of oak and walnut groves with every forgotten meal.

Fast, alert, and astonishingly agile, it can leap up to four metres between branches. Its claws grip bark with precision, and its tail acts as a parachute when descending. Often the forest betrays its presence not by sight but by a flutter of leaves or the soft tap of a walnut falling from above.

Breeding occurs twice a year — early spring and midsummer. The female builds a round, leafy nest high in the branches, called a **drey**. After a 40-day gestation, she gives birth to 3–5 tiny young. They are blind and pink at birth, but within weeks their fur thickens and their eyes open to the world of branches. By six weeks, they begin climbing and leaping awkwardly, learning the ancient art of living among the trees. A young squirrel's first jump — trembling, brave, and full of hope — is one of nature's softest miracles.

In Kurdish folklore, the Simore is a symbol of liveliness, memory, and foresight. Its tireless movements inspired many sayings, such as:
**"Simore avêt lê herinîya xwe dizane."**
*"The squirrel forgets nothing it hides."*
Children are compared to squirrels for their playfulness and bright eyes. Villagers believe that when squirrels are active at dawn, good weather is on its way. In old songs, the Simore is called **"the child of the oak,"** representing life, renewal, and the eternal bond between trees and creatures.

Though still widespread, forest destruction and hunting threaten the Simore in some regions. It depends deeply on old trees and natural woodland, so protecting oak and pine forests is vital for its future. Where squirrels leap, the forest breathes with joy.

*Red flame among green leaves,*
*keeper of seeds and memory —*
*your leaps weave the forest's laughter,*
*your silence keeps its dreams.*

## 🐾 2.37- Ban Banik / Banê Minik / Banoke / Banîkê Kurdistanê

**(بان بانک / بانێ مینیک / بانووکه / بانیکێ کوردستان) — The Kurdish Weasel — The Shadow Runner of the Seasons (Mustela nivalis / Mustela erminea).**

Sleek, quick, and mysterious, the **Ban Banik** is one of Kurdistan's smallest yet most extraordinary predators. It moves like a thread of wind through stone walls, orchards, and mountain slopes — silent, swift, and fearless. Despite its tiny body, it hunts creatures larger than itself, a living symbol of courage and adaptability in the wild soul of Kurdistan. The name *Ban Banik* comes from the sharp call it makes when startled or chasing prey — a sound that Kurdish shepherds once believed warned them of snakes or approaching danger in the mountains.

This agile hunter lives among rocky hillsides, village orchards, old stone walls, and mountain hamlets across **Hawraman, Shaho, Hakkarî, Qandil, Bradost, Soran, Rawanduz, Amedi, Duhok, the foothills of Agirî (Ağrı), Ararat, and the scattered farmlands of Rojava**. It thrives wherever the land offers cracks to slip through and prey to pursue. Day or night, it moves with tireless energy — chasing mice, voles, lizards, insects, and even small birds, making it one of the most important natural protectors of Kurdish farms and villages. Its long, flexible body allows it to disappear into crevices, climb trees with ease, and leap midair to catch a fleeing target. When alarmed, it releases a sharp cry — *ban-banik!* — before vanishing like a streak of smoke, leaving only silence behind.

Small, slender, and graceful, the Ban Banik measures **20–30 cm** and weighs only **70–250 grams**, yet carries the spirit of a hunter ten times its size. In summer, its reddish-brown coat blends with dry soil and golden grass. But when winter falls over Hawraman, Shaho, Rawanduz, and the snow-covered ridges of Hakkarî and Qandil, it transforms almost completely white, leaving only the dark tip of its tail — a masterpiece of nature's design that allows it to disappear into snow as easily as stone.

Spring brings new life to the world of the Ban Banik. Between March and May, the female gives birth to **four to eight kits** in a nest hidden inside a wall, a tree root, or an old burrow. Blind and helpless at first, the young grow quickly, their eyes opening to the world within two weeks. Soon they follow their mother on silent hunting trips, learning every trick: how to leap, how to hide, how to strike with precision. Through summer, the family stays together, moving like a whisper through the fields, until the young finally go their own way.

In Kurdish tradition, the Ban Banik holds a strange mix of respect and superstition. Villagers admire its cleverness and call it the guardian of walls — *banan parêze* — for its talent in keeping houses free of snakes, scorpions, and rats. Old folktales describe it as both a messenger and a warning, a creature that brings change or insight to those who observe it. In Hawraman, a saying is still heard:
**“Ban Banik li qelay xwe nekin.”**
*The weasel never forgets the way to its fortress*.
A reminder that intelligence and persistence can overcome any hardship.

Though still widespread across the Zagros and Taurus foothills, the Ban Banik is rarely seen. Habitat loss, rodent poisons, and old superstitions threaten its survival, but its resilience keeps it roaming the orchards and stone walls of Kurdistan, a small but essential guardian of balance between life, land, and night.

*Spirit of speed and silence,*
*you wear the colours of the earth*.
*In snow you vanish,*
*in dusk you breathe — unseen, unbound*.

## 🐇 2. 38- Mişkê Şîn (مشکه شینه) — The Blue Pika / The Little Hare of the Highlands (Ochotona rufescens)

Small, round, and full of quiet life, the **Mişkê Şîn** — the *“blue mouse”* of Kurdistan — is one of the hidden gems of our mountain ecology. Rarely seen but often heard, its sharp, whistling call slips between rocks on cold mornings like part of the wind itself.
This tiny creature is a close cousin of rabbits and hares, yet it has no tail, shorter ears, and a compact body perfectly shaped for the icy stone world it inhabits. Measuring only 15–20 cm and weighing less than 200 grams, it is dressed in thick grey-blue or sandy-brown fur that blends with the boulder fields of **Halgurd, Qandil, Shaho, Soran, Amedi highlands, Bradost, Penjwen, Rawanduz, and the northern slopes of Agirî (Ararat)**.
In the highest ridges of the Zagros, shepherds recognise it instantly — a shadow among stones, a whistle in the silence.

The Mişkê Şîn makes its home among boulders, talus slopes, and alpine meadows at 1,500–3,000 metres. Beneath these rocks it builds complex burrows, storing grasses and flowers for winter. At dawn it appears briefly to gather herbs and wildflowers, laying them on warm stones to dry — a tiny haymaker preparing for snow.
It is active by day, especially morning and late afternoon. When danger comes — from eagles, foxes, wildcats, or even shepherd dogs — it lets out a loud, piercing whistle that echoes across the cliffs, warning its family group hidden between the stones.
Though fragile in appearance, it plays an essential role in the mountain ecosystem: spreading seeds, shaping meadows, and feeding the raptors and carnivores that define the highlands.

Breeding happens twice a year, in spring and summer. After about 30 days, the female gives birth to 3–6 young — tiny, blind, and helpless at first, but quick to grow. They stay in the burrow for several weeks before joining their parents outside. Family groups are tightly bonded, defending their little territories with sound, scent, and constant vigilance.

In Kurdish mountain culture, the Mişkê Şîn is affectionately called **“kûrê çiyayê hêja”** — *“the precious child of the mountain.”*
Shepherds treat its soft whistle as a good omen, a sign of fair weather and safe paths. Children once imitated its calls across valleys, creating playful echoes between peaks. Because it survives frost, thin air, and stone deserts with grace, it became a quiet symbol of patience and resilience — a reminder that even the smallest creature carries the wisdom of the mountains.

The Mişkê Şîn remains stable in many parts of the Zagros, but climate change threatens the alpine meadows it depends on. As temperatures rise, this cold-loving species is pushed higher toward shrinking summits. Protecting these high meadows and preventing overgrazing are essential to keep the pika’s whistle alive in Kurdistan’s highlands.

Small keeper of the cold stones,
you whistle secrets to the dawn.
Your heart is as light as snow,
yet stronger than the wind.

## 🐭 2.39- Mûşê Avê / Mişê Awê / Mûşê Awî / Mişê Awî

## (مووشی ئاو / مشکە ئاوی / مووشی ئاقێ) — The Water Vole — Keeper of the Streams (Arvicola amphibius)

Quiet, shy, and graceful, the **Mûşê Avê** — literally “Water Mouse” — is one of the smallest guardians of Kurdistan’s rivers. It once thrived along the **Sirwan, Great Zab, Little Zab, Little Khabur**, and the many cold streams that lace the valleys of **Hawraman, Shaho, Qandil, Bradost, Soran, Hakkarî, Van (Wan), Bitlis, and the slopes of Agirî and Ararat**. Wherever reeds sway and frogs sing at dusk, the Mûşê Avê once carved its tiny tunnels into the soft earth. Though humble in size, it plays an enormous role in the life of the rivers — aerating the soil with its burrows, spreading seeds along the banks, feeding owls, herons, and snakes, and keeping the waterways alive. Its presence is a sign of clean, flowing water — a river where nature breathes freely.

The Mûşê Avê prefers slow-moving rivers, ponds, and quiet marsh edges thick with grasses and reeds. It appears most often between dawn and dusk, slipping shyly through the vegetation like a whisper of brown fur. It swims with ease, pushed forward by its partially webbed feet, and can vanish underwater for more than half a minute to escape danger. Unlike rats, it has a short furry tail and a gentle, rounded face that villagers often describe as “cute enough to melt fear itself.” Along the banks of the Sirwan or in the reed beds of the Upper Zab, it builds long tunnels and nests with secret underwater entrances, ensuring safety from foxes and birds of prey. It feeds mostly on river grasses, water plants, roots, and reeds, though it occasionally nibbles fruit or grain from nearby fields — never enough to harm, just enough to survive.

An adult Mûşê Avê measures only **15–22 cm**, weighing **120–200 grams**. Its thick, soft fur — coloured brown or chestnut above and pale beneath — keeps it warm in cold mountain streams. Its dark, curious eyes shine like wet pebbles, and its short ears are almost hidden beneath its dense coat. In spring, when the rivers swell with snowmelt,

breeding begins. From **March to late summer**, the female gives birth to **3–6 young** in a grassy nest inside her burrow. A single pair may raise up to three litters in a good year. After only twenty days, the youngsters leave the nest, already able to swim, dive, and dig their own tunnels — little heirs of the water kingdom.

In Kurdish village lore, the Mûşê Avê is a symbol of purity and quiet labour — a tiny creature that never dirties its home. Many folk tales call it the **"friend of the frog"**, a loyal neighbour who keeps the stream alive. Elders in Hawraman, Shaho, and the villages near Van would warn children: *"Don't frighten the Mûşê Avê — if it leaves, the river will lose its peace."* And it is true: where these creatures vanish, riverbanks begin to collapse, birds disappear, and silence replaces the once-living murmur of water.

Today, the Mûşê Avê is disappearing from many streams in **Rojhilat, Bashur, and Bakur** due to polluted water, drought, chemical pesticides, and the draining of wetlands. Yet in places where rivers have been restored — such as the foothills of **Shaho, the reedbeds of Qandil, the ponds near Duhok, and the clean stretches of Dokan** — it has quietly begun to return, reminding us that protecting this tiny mammal means protecting the very soul of Kurdistan's rivers.

*Little builder of silence,*
*you dig the earth with patience.*
*The river hums your song,*
*and the reeds guard your door.*

## 🐭 2.40- Mişk / Mûşê Axê / Mişkê Zewî (مشک / مووشێ ئەخ / مشکە زەوی)

## — The Field Mouse — Keeper of the Earth's Secrets (Mus macedonicus / Apodemus mystacinus)

Hidden beneath tall grasses and between the stones of Kurdish highland fields lives **Mişk**, the field mouse of Kurdistan — small, gentle, and endlessly busy. You can find it from the plains of **Rojava** to the wheat fields of **Garmiyan**, the orchards of **Amedi and Duhok**, the meadows of **Soran and Bradost**, the mountain villages of **Hakkarî, Şırnak, Van (Wan), Bitlis**, and the oak-dotted hills of **Sine, Kirmashan, Mahabad, Piranshar, and Ilam**.
Though easily overlooked, this humble creature is one of the quiet workers of the land: turning the soil, spreading seeds, and feeding countless animals — from owls and kestrels to foxes, snakes, and even wild cats.
Wherever there is grain, meadow, herb field, or hillside orchard, Mişk is near — an unseen heartbeat of Kurdish rural life.

Mişk prefers open fields, dry stone walls, rocky slopes, gardens, and villages tucked into mountain valleys. It is mostly nocturnal, emerging after sunset to gather seeds, roots, berries, and tiny insects. With quick and careful steps, it can climb grasses and shrubs to reach grains or fruits, then carry them back to its miniature world underground — a network of tunnels with chambers for sleeping, raising pups, and storing food for winter.
Its constant burrowing aerates the soil, and the seeds it carries help meadows and orchards regenerate. Farmers often say that without Mişk, the earth would breathe less.

Small and delicate, Mişk measures **8–11 cm** in body length, with a tail nearly as long as its body. Its fur is soft golden-brown on top and pale beneath, blending perfectly with dry Kurdish soil. Its dark, bright eyes shine like tiny drops of ink under moonlight, and its long whiskers help it navigate the night with ease.

Breeding takes place from **April to September**, especially in warm, food-rich years. The female gives birth to **4–7 pups** per litter and may raise several litters in a single season. The young are blind at birth but open their eyes after around ten days. By one month old, they begin foraging on their own — the next generation of silent night-farmers spreading life through the fields.

In Kurdish folklore, Mişk is not seen as a pest but as a symbol of fertility and blessing. Villagers say that when mice dig at dusk, *"the soil is awake and healthy."* An old proverb teaches:

**"Mişk li jêr xakê dixwete xwarinê — lê ezmanê dikêşe."**

*"The mouse eats beneath the earth — but feeds the sky."*

Its tiny paws carry seeds into hiding places where new plants will someday rise, turning its quiet labour into spring's return.

Though still common across much of Kurdistan, Mişk faces threats from modern farming chemicals, habitat burning, and the disappearance of natural field edges. Protecting traditional agriculture, mixed orchards, and wild meadows allows this little caretaker of nature to survive — keeping Kurdistan's soil alive and generous.

*Tiny farmer of night,*
*your steps sow silence into soil.*
*The land breathes through your tunnels,*
*and the fields remember your song.*

## 🦇 2.41- Çekçekilke / Mîrên Şevê / Mijokên Şevî / Kûsik ( کوسیک چەکچەکیلکە) — The Bats of Kurdistan / The Night Flyers of the Caves (Various species of Chiroptera)

Silent to human ears yet filled with hidden music, the **Çekçekilke** — “the night mouse” of Kurdish lore — is one of the most intricate and misunderstood beings of Kurdistan. When twilight softens the mountains of our land, when the last light fades behind the ridges of **Agirî, Hakkarî, Botan, Hawraman, Qandil, Afrin, Dersim, Urmia**, and the countless caves scattered across **Bakur, Başûr, Rojhilat, and Rojava**, these small shadows rise into the air like drifting embers. They fly not with feathers but with wings of living silk — thin, strong, and folded from the longest fingers nature ever shaped.

Dozens of species live across Kurdistan’s mountains and plains.
The tiny **Kurdistan Pipistrelle**, barely five grams, flutters around orchards like a spark of dusk. The larger **Horseshoe**, **Long-eared**, and **Mouse-eared bats** glide through deep caves in **Ilam, Lorestan, Kirmashan, Mahabad, Ranya, Amedi, Bradost**, and the rocky canyons of **Şirnex, Mêrdîn, Sêrt, Bingol**, and **Cizîr**.
In **Rojava**, colonies sleep in old wells, mud-brick houses, and ancient stone ruins stretching from **Afrin** and **Amûdê** to **Derik, Qamishlo**, and **Hesekê**.

Wherever shadows touch stone and insects hum through the dusk, the Çekçekilke finds a home.
At sunset, they awaken in waves — dozens, hundreds, sometimes thousands — slipping from cliffs like smoke rising into the cooling air. With echolocation they “see” in sound: tiny pulses bouncing from every branch and ripple, allowing them to fly through total darkness with impossible precision.
A single colony protects entire villages, consuming thousands of insects each night and quietly saving the orchards, vineyards, and wheat fields of Kurdistan without anyone ever hearing the work of their wings.

Their lives follow ancient rhythms. Mating begins in late summer, and by winter the females gather in warm caves to form great maternity colonies, sleeping in gentle

hibernation while snow rests on the mountains above. In spring, each mother gives birth to a single pup — pink, fragile, clinging to her belly like a bead of life. She flies with her child, hunts with it, teaches it to understand the world through sound. By early summer, the young bat joins the ancient dance of the night, reading the air as its ancestors did for millions of years.

In Kurdish folklore, the Çekçekilke has always been a creature between worlds — neither bird nor beast, neither day nor night.
Some called them **mîrên şevê** — *the princes of the night* — believing they carried secret messages between the living and the unseen. Others saw them as watchers of silence, guardians who roam when all other creatures sleep.
An old Kurdish proverb says:
**“Çekçekilke di bin sêvê de jî dibîne” — “The night mouse sees even beneath the apple tree.”**
Meaning: true wisdom does not need the sun.

Today, despite their quiet labour and enormous value, bats face rising threats across Kurdistan — destruction of caves, heavy pesticide use, quarry blasting, electric lights, and urban disturbance. Because they give birth to only one young each year and live long, slow lives, even a small loss can collapse a whole colony. Protecting their roosts, limiting cave tourism, and reducing chemical poisons are essential if we wish to keep these ancient night guardians in our skies.

Whispering wing of the dark,
you draw light from sound.
Your path is the pulse of the air,
and your song is silence itself.

## 🐄 2.42- Gaw / Ga/ Manga û Cwanega (گاو/ گا /مانگا و جوانەگا)

## — The Cow of Kurdistan — The Giver of Milk and Strength (Bos taurus)

For more than **nine thousand years**, the **Gaw** has walked beside the Kurdish people — gentle, patient, nourishing, and endlessly giving. Archaeology in the Zagros Mountains reveals that cattle were domesticated here among Kurdish ancestors, making the cow not just an animal, but one of the oldest companions of Kurdish civilisation.

Wherever you travel across Kurdistan, the sound of cowbells and the warmth of village barns follow like an ancient heartbeat. From the high summer pastures of **Hewraman, Shaho, Qandil, Bradost, Colemêrg (Hakkarî), Amed, Bingol (Çewlîk), Bêdlês, Wan, Dersim, Erzingan, Erzerom, Qers, Rîndik, Arta, Bayburt, Artvîn**, and the deep valleys around **Mêrdîn, Dilok (Antep), Riha, Semîsat, Şirnex, Êlû (Batman), Mûş**, to the fertile lowlands of **Garmiyan, Kalar, Xaneqîn, Khanaqin, Mandalî, Kifri, Rojava, Kobanê, Afrin, Qamişlo**, and the rich plains surrounding **Mahabad, Urmê (Urmia), Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan, Eqbatan (Hamedan), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle, Xorawa (Khorramabad), Xoristan (Khuzestan)** — everywhere the Kurdish cow has shaped the rhythms of daily life.
Even in the great river-fed farmlands of **Neynawa (Mosul)** and the old agricultural belt around **Tîsfon (Baghdad)**, the presence of cattle has shaped Kurdish villages for centuries.

The Kurdish cow lives where people live — grazing freely on alpine meadows in summer, then resting in warm, mud-brick barns through the snowy months. It thrives on wild herbs, fresh mountain grass, wheat stalks, and the cool waters flowing from springs and rivers. Its milk is life itself: thick, rich, and nourishing, turned into **mast, rovî, geymak, penîr**, and **do**, the foods that define the Kurdish table.

Steady and intelligent, the Gaw remembers every path and every voice, walking the same trails along stony slopes, crossing streams where generations of hooves have shaped the stone. During planting season, two Manga walk side by side, pulling the

wooden plough and turning the earth with a rhythm older than written history — the rhythm of Kurdish agriculture.

Medium-sized yet strong, the Kurdish cow carries a quiet beauty. Its coat ranges from deep red to grey or black, sometimes marked with a bright white blaze like a stroke of moonlight down its forehead. Its horns curve gently, strong enough for work yet shaped by years of peace. Its dark eyes reflect a deep calm — the patience of a mother, the quiet strength of the land.

After a gestation of nine months, the Gaw gives birth once a year, most often in late winter or early spring. The calf — **gawzik / gwêlik** — rises shakily within the first hour and begins its slow, gentle journey into life. Kurdish families often name their calves with affection, treating them not as livestock but as blessings — signs of fortune, continuity, and protection. A healthy cow in the barn means the household will never starve.

The cow's place in Kurdish culture is sacred. Its milk feeds entire villages; its strength ploughs the soil; its presence gives warmth, stability, and a sense of home. During spring celebrations, villagers wash the cows in running water and place flowers on their heads, honouring the seasons of fertility and new life.

Old Kurdish wisdom says:

**"Gawî mastê — jiyana gundê."**
*"The cow's milk is the life of the village."*

To Kurdish hearts, the cow is a symbol of gentleness, labour, motherhood, and the silent endurance of generations. It is the quiet backbone of rural life — the soft, warm breath in winter barns, the companion of shepherds, the steady giver of nourishment and hope.

*You plough the dreams of the earth,*
*your breath a song of patience.*

*In your eyes, the sky finds peace,*

*and the fields remember your steps.*

## 🐃 2.43- Gâmêş / Gawê Awê (گامێش / گاوێ ئاوێ) — The Water Buffalo — The Spirit of the Marshlands (Bubalus bubalis)

The **Gâmêş**, the great water buffalo of Kurdistan, is a creature shaped by warm rivers, deep marshes, and ancient rural memory. In the reed beds and lowlands of the Kurdish lands, it moves like a slow black wave — powerful, patient, and inseparable from the earth. It thrives wherever water softens the soil: in Khanaqin and Xaneqîn, across the plains of **Garmian, Kalar, Mandalî**, and the fertile valleys beneath **Hewraman**. It grazes along the lower **Sirwan** basin, the wetlands of **Kifri**, the marshy stretches of **Baxtiyarî** and **Kewegle**, and the broad rivers flowing toward **Xorawa (Khorramabad)**, **Xoristan (Khuzestan)**, and the edge of **Tîsfon (Baghdad)**.
Farther north, it appears around the river-fed fields of **Urmê (Urmia)**, as well as the agricultural lowlands near **Amed, Şirnex, Riha (Urfa), Semîsat (Adıyaman), Dilok (Antep), Mêrdîn**, and the historic farmlands of **Xarpêt (Elazığ)**. Wherever warm water gathers and reeds whisper in the wind, the Gâmêş becomes part of the land's deep breath.

In the burning Kurdish summers, when the plains turn white with heat, the buffalo sinks into mud pools or shallow rivers, coating its thick skin to protect against insects and sun. Its life follows a gentle rhythm: grazing in the early light, resting in water through the long afternoon, rising again when dusk softens the horizon. Despite their immense size, these animals are peaceful giants — intelligent, steady, and emotionally bonded to their herds and to the people who raise them.
For generations they have ploughed rice paddies and waterlogged fields where no ox or horse could endure, pulling wooden yokes through the mud with unmatched strength. They remember paths, watering spots, and the familiar voices of their owners with a loyalty that surprises even old herders.

Their bodies carry the raw beauty of marshland life. The skin is dark grey to midnight black, shining like river stone when they emerge from water. Their horns curve

gracefully backward, long and powerful, framing broad heads with calm, deep-set eyes — eyes that hold the patience of reeds and the wisdom of dusk. Males may weigh **700–800 kilograms**, towering like living mountains of mud and muscle. Females are smaller yet equally strong, built for endurance, motherhood, and the slow, sacred work of water.

Breeding comes with the warmth of late spring and early summer. After nearly **eleven months** of carrying her young, the mother gives birth to a single calf — unsteady at first, but standing within minutes on trembling legs. Guided by the mother's soft lowing, the newborn follows her into the world of water, staying close for many months. Kurdish families celebrate the birth of a calf as a blessing — a sign of wealth, continuity, and the living heartbeat of rural life.

The Gâmêş holds a honoured place in Kurdish culture. Many call it **zêrê reş** — "the black gold" — for its rich milk that becomes **mast, rovî, geymak**, and the beloved **penîrê gawê awê**, foods tied to the memory of grandmothers and old kitchens. In past generations, buffalo horns were carved into tools, instruments, and ornaments, each one made with respect for the animal's strength.
Folktales describe the buffalo as a symbol of endurance, quiet dignity, and a power that never shouts — a being that asks for little but gives everything.

An old Kurdish proverb says:

**"Gâmêş di avê de xwe dişêne, lê bê av nabe."**
*"The buffalo thrives in water — without it, it dies."*

A simple truth, yet a reminder that when the world a creature belongs to disappears, a piece of the land's soul fades with it.

*Black mirror of rivers,*
*keeper of the silent mud —*
*your strength is slow thunder,*
*your eyes remember the rain.*

## 🐴 2.44- Esp / Maîn û Bargîn / Esb / Esbê Kurdistanê

## (ئەسپ / ماین و بارگین / ئەسبی کوردستان / ئەسبی کوردی)- The Pride of the Mountains (Equus caballus) — The Horse of Kurdistan

Among all the animals woven into Kurdish memory, none stands as proudly as the **Esp**, the Kurdish horse. From the time of the ancient Medes — whose riders once ruled the Zagros — to today's mountain shepherds guiding their flocks across high passes, the horse has been more than a companion. It has been a symbol of freedom, dignity, and the unbroken spirit of the Kurdish people.

The Kurdish horse thrives wherever the land opens its heart: the high summer pastures of **Hewraman, Shaho, Qandil, Bradost, Soran, Amedi, Colemêrg (Hakkarî), Wan, Dersim, Erzingan, Erzerom, Qers, Bêdlês, Artvîn, Bayburt, Arta**, and the rolling plains surrounding **Amed, Dilok (Antep), Semîsat, Riha, Şirnex, Sêrt, Êlû (Batman), Mûş**. It gallops through the fields of **Garmiyan, Kalar, Xaneqîn, Mandalî**, and along the long river roads of **Neynawa (Mosul)**. It appears in the far villages of **Rojava — Afrin, Kobanê, Qamişlo** — and grazes freely near **Mahabad, Urmê (Urmia), Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan, Eqbatan (Hamedan), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle, Xorawa (Khorramabad)** and the warm foothills stretching toward **Xoristan**.

Wherever mountains breathe and plains open wide, the Esp is at home.

Strong, sure-footed, and quick-thinking, the Kurdish horse is built for endurance. It knows how to move across stones and steep ridges with the grace of a dancer and the precision of a hunter. It drinks from cold mountain springs, grazes on wild grasses, and forms deep emotional bonds with its rider — bonds made not through force, but through voice, touch, and trust.

Medium-sized yet powerful, the Espê Kurdî dazzles with natural elegance. Its coat may be chestnut, grey, black, or golden-brown, shimmering like sunlight on a hillside. Its legs are slender but muscular, built for distance and speed. Its eyes hold a depth that

Kurds often compare to the calm of dusk — alert, expressive, filled with both fire and softness.
A well-bred Kurdish horse can travel long distances without rest, carrying its rider across rugged mountains where machines fail.

In the warmth of late spring, mares give birth after nearly eleven months. The newborn foal — shaky, wide-eyed, filled with new breath — stands within minutes beneath its mother, learning the world through the sound of her heartbeat. Kurdish families often celebrate the foal's first gallop, believing that the strength and purity of its first run carry blessings for the household. These foals stay close to their mothers for many months, growing into companions that share the life of the family.

The horse is holy in Kurdish culture. It appears in old songs, in love poems, in legends of warriors and wanderers. It carried the defenders of **Dimdim Castle**, followed **Sheikh Ubeydullah's riders**, and galloped through countless untold stories across mountains and time.
Even today, the horse races of **Hewraman, Soran, Wan, Sine**, and many villages echo the ancient joy of speed and freedom.

To the Kurdish heart, the Esp is not owned — it is honoured. It walks beside its rider like an equal, sharing the wind, the struggle, and the pride of the land.

As the old Kurdish proverb says:

**"Espê baş xwedê ji mêran razî ye."**
*"A good horse pleases even God."*

*Wind in your mane,*
*fire beneath your hooves —*
*you do not run,*
*you remember freedom.*

## 🫏 2.45- Gwê Drêj / Ker / Kêrê Kurdistanê (گوێ درێژ / کەر / کەری کوردستان) — The Donkey of Kurdistan — The Humble Traveller of the Hills (Equus asinus

The **Gwê Drêj**, the Kurdish donkey, has been the quiet companion of mountain families for thousands of years — the humble traveller of the hills, carrying burdens and stories across the rugged heart of Kurdistan. It is found in almost every village and valley: from the snowy highlands of **Hewraman, Shaho, Qandil, Bradost, Colemêrg (Hakkarî), Wan, Dersim, Erzingan, Erzerom, Qers, Artvîn, Bayburt, Arta**, and the rocky slopes near **Bêdlês, Çewlîk (Bingol), Amed, Mêrdîn**, and **Dilok (Antep)**, to the gentle plains of **Garmiyan, Kalar, Xaneqîn, Mandalî, Kifri**, and the farmlands around **Neynawa (Mosul)**.

It walks the dusty roads of **Rojava — Afrin, Kobanê, Qamişlo**, and grazes near the orchards of **Mahabad, Urmê (Urmia), Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan, Eqbatan (Hamedan), Xorawa (Khorramabad), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, and even the warm edges of **Xoristan**, where summer heat shimmers across the lowlands.
Wherever Kurdish life has settled, the donkey has been there — steady, faithful, enduring.

Unlike horses or buffalo, the Gwê Drêj masters the steepest paths. It climbs narrow mountain trails where only goats dare to tread, carrying wood, grain, water jars, firewood, harvest bundles, and sometimes children laughing upon its back. It survives on little, asks for nothing, and gives everything. Its intelligence is quiet, its memory deep — a donkey knows every stone of the path, every turn of the valley, every voice that has walked beside it.

Small to medium-sized, with coats of grey, brown, or deep black, the Kurdish donkey stands modest yet strong. Its short upright mane and long expressive ears give it a thoughtful, searching look. Its hooves — narrow, tough, unbreakable — are shaped by

generations of mountain travel. Its eyes, soft and soulful, reflect the patience of Kurdish rural life and the weight of unspoken stories.

A mother donkey (**Ma ker**) carries her foal for nearly **twelve months**, giving birth to a single **Cashik** — a foal that stands within the first hour, wobbling into the world on thin new legs. These young ones follow their mothers closely through hillsides and orchards, learning the routes and rhythms of the land. They grow up surrounded by the everyday sounds of village life: cowbells, shepherd calls, grinding mills, and the wind weaving through orchards.

In Kurdish culture, the donkey is more than a beast of burden. It is a symbol of endurance, humility, and silent strength. Though sometimes mentioned in jokes, every villager knows the truth: the donkey carried the weight of Kurdish life through the hardest years — through winters of scarcity, through long journeys, through wars, migrations, and drought.
Its step — slow, steady, unwavering — is the hidden pulse of rural Kurdistan.

Elders often say:

**“Gwê Drêja bêdeng, dilê giran heye.”**
*“The silent donkey has a heavy heart.”*

A saying born from respect, acknowledging that even the quietest beings carry the largest burdens.

*Step by step,*
*stone by stone,*
*you carry the world*
*without complaint.*

## 🦌 2.46- Kere Kêwî / Kerê Zagrosê (کەرە زاگرۆس / کەرە کێوی) — The Zagros Onager / The Wild Ass of Kurdistan (Equus hemionus onager)

Swift, strong, and untamed, the **Kere Kêwî** — the Wild Ass of Kurdistan — is the soul of the open plains and steppe lands of the Zagros. It runs with the wind across dry valleys and salt flats, carrying the memory of ancient caravans and forgotten kingdoms. Once abundant from the plains of **Khanaqin, Kifri, Mandalî, Mehran, Ilam, Badreh, Dehloran**, and the **Hawizeh Marshes**, stretching northward toward the foothills of **Shaho, Hawraman, Kermashan, Lorestan**, and east toward the open basins between **Mahabad, Bokan, and Urmia**, it is now among the rarest and most noble creatures of the Kurdish wilderness.

The Kere Kêwî resembles a small, elegant horse but with a leaner, more athletic build. It stands 1.2–1.4 metres at the shoulder and weighs 200–250 kilograms. Its coat gleams sandy-gold in summer and turns pale silver in winter, blending perfectly with the dry steppe of Kurdistan. A dark dorsal stripe runs along its back — a mark linking it to the earliest equids of ancient Mesopotamia.

The Kere Kêwî once thrived in the semi-desert plains, rolling grasslands, and rocky foothills of **Southern and Eastern Kurdistan**, especially around **Kifri, Khanaqin, Germiyan plains, Ilam, Mehran, Mandali**, and the **Mesopotamian fringes near Xerapê (Basra)**. It favoured open country with sparse shrubs and vast visibility to detect predators. Small herds, led by a dominant stallion, wandered across wide distances in search of water and grazing. It could outrun almost anything — reaching 70 km/h — surviving by speed, endurance, and sharp awareness. Feeding on dry grasses, desert roots, and shrubs, it could endure long periods without water, drawing moisture from plants and morning dew. For generations, shepherds described it as the “wind-born horse” — a creature of balance, discipline, and freedom.

Mating occurred in late spring. After 11–12 months of gestation, the mare gave birth to a single foal. Within minutes, the newborn stood; within hours, it could run. The mother

hid her foal in tall grasses for several days before bringing it back to the herd. Foals remained close to their mothers for a year, learning the ancient routes of the plains and the subtle language of herd life — a vocabulary of snorts, neighs, head movements, and hoof signals that once echoed across Kurdistan's steppe.

In Kurdish heritage, the **Kere Kêwî Azad** represents dignity, independence, and the right to roam unbound. Its name — *Azad*, "free" — reflects the Kurdish soul itself. Ancient Elamite and Assyrian carvings show wild asses pulling royal chariots, guiding hunters, or standing beside kings as symbols of divine speed. Kurdish poets compare brave men and wild horses to the Kere Kêwî: noble, proud, and beyond the grasp of any rope. Old villagers would say:
**"Kere kêwî azad, ne girêw dide."**
*"The wild ass gives itself to no rope."*
It was a reminder that some spirits are born to be free, and any attempt to tame them is an insult to nature.

The Kere Kêwî Azad once roamed widely across **Southern and Eastern Kurdistan**, including **Khanaqin, Kifri, Ilam, Dehloran, Mandali, Hawizeh Marshes**, and occasionally the lower Zagros foothills. But by the early 20th century, it had vanished from Kurdish lands, struck down by relentless hunting, expansion of farmland, competition with domestic animals, and long, punishing droughts. The last confirmed presence in Kurdistan was over a century ago. Yet the same subspecies — *Equus hemionus onager* — survives today in protected zones of western Iran, especially in **Khar Turan National Park**, the **Kavir Desert Reserve**, and the conservation areas near **Khuzestan**, just beyond the old Kurdish range. These surviving herds are the descendants of those that once galloped across Kurdistan's steppe, carrying the memory of a freedom now lost but not forgotten.

Conservationists dream that one day, with restored habitats in **Ilam, Khanaqin, and the Germiyan steppe**, the Kere Kêwî might return home — running again across its ancestral plains, a living bridge between the mountains and the ancient spirit of wilderness.

Child of dust and dawn,

you run where dreams have no fences;

the earth beats beneath your hooves,

and the wind calls your name —

**Azad... Azad.**

## 🫎 2.47- Mall / Êster / Hêster /Êsterê Kurdistanê

**(ماڵ / ئێستر / حێستر / ئێستریێ کوردستان) — 🫏 Mall — The Mule of Kurdistan (Equus caballus × Equus asinus)**

The **Mall**, the Kurdish mule, is the humble traveller of rugged landscapes — a creature shaped by mountain wind, stone, and the long memory of village life. Born from a male donkey (**gêw**) and a female horse (**esp**), it carries in its body the balance of two worlds: the calm endurance of the donkey and the proud strength of the horse.
From the snowy ridges of **Hewraman, Shaho, Amedi, Penjwen, Soran, Bradost, Qandil, Wan, Colemêrg (Hakkarî), Dersim, Agrî, Bêdlês**, and the wild valleys of **Amed, Mêrdîn, Botan, Şirnex, Çewlîk, Meletî**, to the sun-soaked plains of **Garmiyan, Kalar, Kifri, Xaneqîn, Mandalî**, and the ancient routes of **Rojava — Afrin, Cindirês, Shiye, Kobanê, Qamişlo, Derik**, the mule has walked every narrow path carved into the Kurdish land.
In Rojhilat, it moves among the foothills and gardens of **Sine (Ardalan), Merîwan, Paveh, Hawraman Takht, Kirmaşan, Xorawa, Xoristan, Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, and across the vast countryside around **Mahabad, Piranshar, Urmê (Urmia)**.

Where Kurdish footsteps go, the Mall goes — patiently, faithfully, and without complaint.

The Kurdish mule is wise, calm, and steady even on dangerous mountain paths where no cart or vehicle can travel. It carries firewood, water, grain, tools, children, and sometimes entire livelihoods across terrain too harsh for other animals.
It rarely panics. It listens to the voice of its owner, remembers every twist of the trail, and understands the mountains as if born from their stone.
In many villages, the mule is more than a worker — it is a quiet companion, walking beside families for decades.

The Mall's appearance reflects its mixed heritage.
It carries the muscular chest and height of a horse, yet inherits the long ears, sturdy legs, and unshakable hooves of the donkey.
Its coat comes in soft greys, warm browns, or deep chestnut tones, shining with a smooth, practical beauty.
Its walk is measured and dignified — never hurried, never careless — the walk of a creature that knows the land intimately.

Because mules are sterile, each one must be bred anew: a male donkey paired with a female horse.
This makes every Mall precious.
Farmers raise them from a young age, teaching them through kindness, repetition, and trust.
A mule trained with respect will follow its owner like a shadow; a mule treated harshly will close its heart forever.

In Kurdish culture, the Mall symbolizes strength, perseverance, and humility.
It has carried salt caravans between mountains, transported grain between distant villages, crossed borders during hardship, and served as the backbone of rural life for thousands of years.
A well-known Kurdish proverb says:

**"Mallê jîr, rêya dirêjê nayetî."**
*"A wise mule never fears a long road."*

Quiet and uncelebrated, yet essential — the Mall is the memory of every steep trail, every hidden valley, every old journey taken before roads existed.

*Neither horse nor donkey —*
*you are both, and more.*
*The silent path remembers your feet,*
*and the mountains your patience.*

## 🐫 2.48- Wişt ir / Huştir (وشتر / حوشتر) — The Camel — The Ship of the Desert and the Highland Trader (Camelus dromedarius & Camelus bactrianus)

The **Huştir**, the Kurdish camel, is a creature of wind, patience, and ancient trade routes — once an essential partner in the movement of people, goods, and stories across the southern plains and eastern highlands of Kurdistan. Though no longer common today, it once shaped the lifeblood of travel and commerce, walking slowly but steadily across the sun-baked earth. From the wide open lowlands of **Khanaqin, Kalar, Kifri, Jalawla, Xaneqîn, Mandalî**, and the fertile plains of **Garmiyan**, to the trade roads stretching from **Hewlêr (Erbil) and Kirkuk** toward the deep valleys of **Kirmashan (Kermanshah)**, **Xoristan (Khuzestan)**, **Xorawa (Khorramabad)**, **Eqbatan (Hamedan)**, and onward toward **Neynawa (Mosul)** and **Tîsfon (Baghdad)**, the camel once carried the heartbeat of a travelling civilisation. In Rojhilat, they moved through the foothills and plains around **Sine (Ardalan)**, **Mahabad**, **Piranshar**, **Urmê (Urmia)**, **Baxtiyarî**, and **Kewegle**, where old tribes still remember the soft chiming of their caravan bells. Even in Rojava, small groups once crossed the dry lands near **Riha (Şanliurfa)**, **Dilok (Gaziantep)**, **Afrin**, **Kobanê**, and **Qamişlo**, linking mountain villages with Mesopotamian markets.

The camel survives where few creatures can — in scorching heat, on barren ground, or across long distances without water. It carries burdens up to 300 kilograms, and yet walks with a slow grace born from centuries of endurance. With every step, it remembers the old paths — salt routes, spice routes, the silent lines of trade that once tied the Kurdish mountains to Persia, Arabia, and the Levant.

Two kinds blessed Kurdistan's roads:

- **The Arabian camel (dromedary)** — one hump, shaped by desert heat and the open plains of the south.
- **The Bactrian camel** — two humps, adapted to the colder highlands and winter winds touching northern districts like **Wan**, **Erzerom**, **Qers**, **Agrî**, and **Artvîn**.

Kurdish merchants often bred hybrids — strong, patient, and unmatched for long journeys across valleys and mountain passes.

Tall and lean with a long neck and soft, intelligent eyes, the Huştir Kurdî holds a quiet nobility. Its padded feet carry it easily across sand, gravel, and thorny plains, and its thick lips allow it to graze on plants too harsh for other animals. Its coat, ranging from sandy gold to pale brown, glows beneath the sun as if dusted with the colour of the land itself.

Camels live long lives — forty to fifty years — forming strong bonds with the families who raise them. The female gives birth to a single calf after thirteen long months of waiting, and the newborn stands within hours, its first steps often taken along the caravan trail. Kurdish families treasured these gentle giants, naming them, decorating them with colourful ropes, and treating them as partners rather than livestock.

In Kurdish memory, the Huştir is a symbol of patience, endurance, and the quiet strength of those who travelled for trade or migration. Caravan songs once rose at sunrise, echoing across the plains of **Garmiyan, Kirkuk, Kermashan**, and the southern Zagros, where long lines of camels carried salt, dates, wool, rugs, and spices between mountains and cities. An old Kurdish proverb reminds us:

**“Huştir bê bell, rêya nezanî.”**
*“A camel without a bell does not know its road.”*

Even today, in remote corners of the Zagros, a few nomadic families still keep camels for tradition, honouring the memories of roads their ancestors once walked.

*Slow traveller of the earth,*
*your silence is a song of patience —*
*each step a memory*
*of wind, sand, and distance.*

## 🐗 2.49- Beraza Kewî / Beraza Zagrosê / Beraza Şaxî ( بەرازی کێوی / بەرازی زاگرۆس / بەرازی شاخی) — The Wild Boar / The Free Boar of Kurdistan (Sus scrofa scrofa)

Muscular, fearless, and deeply rooted in the wilderness, the **Beraza Kewî** roams the forests, riverbanks, and wetlands of Kurdistan as one of the last symbols of the region's untamed strength. Its presence is both respected and feared — a reminder that nature still holds power beyond human reach.

Wild boars remain widespread across the rugged landscapes of Kurdistan, especially in the oak forests of **Şaho, Hawraman, Merîwan, Paveh, Penjwen, Rawanduz, Bradost, Qandil, Barzan**, and the river valleys of **Sirwan, Ranya, Dukan, and Kifri**. In the north they roam **Hakkarî, Şirnex, Amed, Botan, Êlih, Wan, Dersim, Bingol, Agirî, and Qers**, while in the west they inhabit the fertile edges of **Afrin, Derik, Hesekê**, and the reed beds of the Rojava plains. In the south and east, they survive in the borderlands of **Kirmashan, Ilam, Lorestan, Khanaqin, Garmian, and Mandalî** — wherever forest, water, and shade meet.

Adult males can reach 1.5 metres in length and weigh 120–180 kilograms, while females are smaller and more social. Their coarse, bristly coats vary from dark grey to brown, blending perfectly with oak leaves, soil, and river mud. Their sharp tusks — up to 20 cm in the males — are used for defence, digging, and dominance battles.

Wild boars are highly intelligent, adaptable, and resourceful. They can swim across wide rivers, climb steep hillsides, and remember feeding grounds for years. Mostly nocturnal, they move like shadows through the forest, emerging at dusk to forage on roots, acorns, figs, tubers, insects, fallen fruit, and occasionally small animals. Family groups called **sounders**, led by a dominant female, communicate with soft grunts, squeals, and rhythmic steps through the leaves.

Mating occurs in winter, and after a gestation of about 115 days, the female gives birth to 4–8 striped piglets in a hidden nest of leaves, grass, and branches. Within hours, the piglets stand and follow their mother, their striped coats camouflaged perfectly against the forest floor. Fiercely protective, mothers will charge wolves or men if the den is threatened. After a year, the young males leave to live solitary lives, while females remain with the herd.

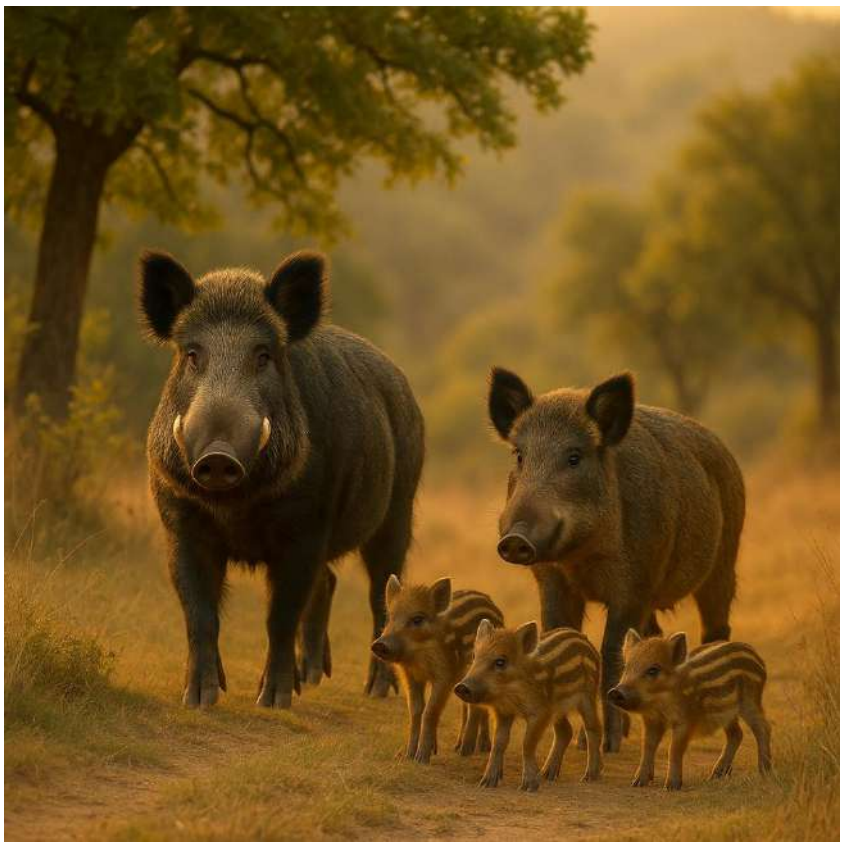
In Kurdish folklore, the Beraza Kewî is a symbol of strength, courage, and wild independence. Though rarely hunted or eaten, it is admired for its fierceness and resilience. An old saying declares:

**“Beraza Kewî di bin xwe de şêr e.”**
*“The wild boar is a lion in its own shadow.”*

In village tales, the boar appears as a challenger, a guardian of hidden springs, or a test for brave hunters. Where its tracks are found at dawn, people say the forest spirits walked before sunrise.

The Beraza Kewî remains common in many forests, though habitat loss, poaching, and conflict with farmers continue to threaten its numbers. Protecting river corridors, oak woodlands, and mountain passes will keep this ancient creature thriving — for where the wild boar roams, the wilderness remains alive.

Walker of midnight leaves,
your eyes are embers in the dark.
The forest breathes when you pass,
and silence bows before your strength.



## 🐖 2.50- Berazê Xomalî / Berazê Mālî / Weraz

## (بەرازی خۆماڵی / بەرازی ماڵی / وەراز) — The Domestic Pig — The Hidden Forager of the Forest Edges (Sus scrofa domesticus)

The **Berazê Xomalî**, the domestic pig once kept in ancient Kurdish agrarian life, is today a forgotten companion — replaced by memory, myth, and the quiet rustle of its wild relatives that still roam the forests of Kurdistan. Though rarely raised in modern Kurdish culture due to religious customs, the animal has deep historical roots in the land, stretching back to early Zagros civilisations long before Islam, Christianity, or even late Zoroastrianism.

Archaeological remains from **Hawraman, Sharazur, Urmê (Urmia Basin), Sine (Ardalan), Kirmashan**, and the ancient agricultural plains of **Garmiyan, Khanaqin, and Xaneqîn** show that pigs were once part of early Neolithic Kurdish households. In Mesopotamian times, they were raised in the river-fed lands around **Neynawa (Mosul)** and the Tîsfon–Baghdad corridor, where wild boars still thrive today. Their wild cousins — **Berazê Chiyan**, the wild boars of Kurdistan — continue to roam freely across the oak forests, river valleys, and mountain foothills of **Hewraman, Shaho, Penjwen, Qandil, Zagros, Loristan (Xorawa, Xoristan), Eqbatan, Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, and northward through the wooded hills of **Amed, Mêrdîn, Çewlîk, Dersim, Şirnex, Garzan, Botan, Wan, Qers, Erzerom, Agrî, and Artvîn**.

The domestic pig is a sturdy and intelligent animal — social, sensitive, and curious. It loves the earth: digging for roots, worms, and fallen fruits, turning soil as it searches for food. In summer heat, it wallows in mud pools as a natural shield against sun and insects, behaving much like its wild relatives of the Zagros valleys. Despite their reputation, they are among the cleanest animals in nature, choosing separate places for sleeping, feeding, and waste.

The Berazê Xomalî has a powerful body supported by short, strong legs, a flattened snout perfect for rooting, and a coat that may be pink, brown, black, or mottled. Their sense of smell rivals that of dogs, and their intelligence is remarkable — they can learn paths, voices, and routines with ease. Mother pigs (sows) are deeply nurturing, giving birth twice a year to litters of 6–12 striped piglets. These young ones grow fast, following their mothers through thickets and foraging grounds, learning the language of the soil. Their family structure is matriarchal, with the eldest sow guiding the group — a quiet echo of ancient Kurdish tribal life.

Though domestic pigs have disappeared from most Kurdish households, their wild cousins continue to shape the land. **Berazê Chiyan** roam in herds across oak forests from **Hewraman and Shaho to Dersim and Garzan**, and along the river valleys of **Urmia, Kirmashan, Garmiyan**, and the marshlands toward **Xoristan and southern Zagros**. They turn the forest floor, spread seeds, and break the soil, becoming natural gardeners of the mountains. In mythology and early agrarian belief, the pig symbolised abundance, fertility, and the hidden richness of the earth — a reminder of the time when humans and animals shared the fields with equal dependence.

*Forgotten root-digger,*
*once you shared our hearths —*
*now only your wild kin*
*sing your name in the forest mud.*

## 🐻 2.51- Extinct or Lost Mammals of Kurdistan

**(ئاژەڵانێک کە پێشتر لە کوردستان ژیاون — یادەوەریی ژیانێک لە نێوان دەنگ و بێدەنگی)**

**Echoes of the Vanished Footsteps — Shadows That Once Breathed the Mountains**

There was a time when the mountains and valleys of Kurdistan thundered with the roars, songs, and footfalls of creatures now lost to memory.
From the golden plains of Garmian to the snowbound ridges of Shaho and Zagros, the land once held a world of wild majesty — now silent, fading into legend.
These vanished mammals are more than names in old tales; they are part of Kurdistan's soul, woven into its songs, stories, and stone.

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## 🦁 2.52- Şêrê Mezopotamya / Şêrê Kurdistanê ( شێرێ مەزوپوتامیا / شێرێ کوردستان) — The Asiatic Lion — The Lost King of the Kurdish Plains (Panthera leo persica)

The **Şêrê Mezopotamya**, the Lion of Mesopotamia, was once the undisputed monarch of the southern and western plains of Kurdistan — a golden shadow walking through the warm reeds, riverbeds, and starlit grasslands of **Hewlêr (Erbil), Kirkuk, Xaneqîn, Kifri, Garmiyan, Mandalî, Jalawla, Ilam (Kirmaşan borderlands)** and the wide valleys of the **Tigris and Sirwan**.
From the oak-lined foothills of **Hewraman, Silemani**, and the open plains stretching toward **Neynawa (Mosul), Xoristan (Khuzestan), Xorawa (Khorramabad), Baxtiyarî**,

and the river-curved lands toward **Eqbatan (Hamedan)** — this lion once breathed the same wind as the Kurdish shepherds and the migrating gazelles.

It lived in tall reeds, acacia thickets, warm river forests, and semi-desert plains where herds of wild ass, gazelle, and deer once grazed in great numbers. The lion hunted silently at night or just before dawn, its golden eyes glowing like embers under the Kurdish moon. Smaller and leaner than the African lion, the Asiatic Lion had a shorter mane, a long belly fold, and a body built for moving through dense brush — a shape adapted to Kurdistan's plains.
Yet anyone who saw it, even once, spoke of its presence with reverence: the quiet authority, the slow, powerful stride, the way its breath seemed to rise like heat from the earth itself.

The male stood around a meter tall at the shoulder and weighed up to 190 kilograms. Its coat — pale tawny, dusted with sand — blended perfectly into the bronze-coloured grasses of the Tigris plains. Females were smaller, quicker, and lacked the heavy mane, yet their strength was equal. Old travellers to **Khanaqin, Mandalî, and the lower Sirwan Basin** described the Mesopotamian lions as "**golden ghosts**," appearing at dusk when the whole land turned amber beneath the setting sun.

Lion families lived in small prides, usually near rivers, raising their cubs in dense brush where hyenas and jackals could not approach easily. Females gave birth every two years to two to four cubs, hidden safely until they were strong enough to walk the plains. Lions were keystones of the old Kurdish ecosystem — their presence shaped the behaviour and numbers of grazing animals.
When they disappeared, the plains changed forever.

In Kurdish, Persian, and Mesopotamian history, the lion has always carried the meaning of **strength, honour, kingship, and divine guardianship**. Ancient reliefs from **Nineveh, Persepolis, Hatra**, and the temples of old Mesopotamia show lions at the side of kings — protectors of the land, symbols of justice and power.
Kurdish oral tradition still holds their memory.
Old hunters of **Khanaqin**, **Ilam**, and **Mandalî** once spoke of nights when lions roared

across the plains until the mid-1800s. The last confirmed lion in Kurdistan is believed to have been killed near **Ilam** in the early 1900s, ending thousands of years of presence — a silence that still echoes today.

But in stories, the Şêrê Mezopotamya survives.
A Kurdish saying remembers it:

**“Şêrê kuştî jî, di xewnê xwe de dihêwît.”**
*“Even a slain lion still hunts in dreams.”*

And indeed, it does — roaming through the memories of shepherds, carved into ancient stones, living in the winds of the Tigris plains where its shadow once fell.

King without a kingdom,
your roar sleeps in the reeds —
the earth remembers your shadow,
the rivers your thirst for dawn.

## 🐅 2.53 – Bebri Kurdistanê / Bebrê Zagrosê (بەبری کوردستان / بەبرێ زاگرۆسێ)

## — The Zagros Tiger — The Vanished King of Kurdistan's River Valleys

*(Panthera tigris virgata – Caspian Tiger)*

The **Bebrê Kurdistanê**, the Zagros Tiger, was once the greatest predator ever to walk the forests, marshes and river valleys of ancient Kurdistan — a magnificent king whose powerful footsteps echoed through the wetlands of the Tigris, the Sirwan, the Lower Zab and the broad valleys stretching from **Kirmaşan (Kermashan)**, **Ilam**, **Xoristan (Khuzestan)** and **Dehloran** towards **Neynawa (Mosul)** and the fertile lowlands lying beneath the Zagros Mountains.

Long before roads crossed the mountains and cities spread across the valleys, the Bebr wandered through dense river forests where willow, poplar, tamarisk and reeds bordered cool flowing rivers.

It lived wherever water was abundant.

Among thick reed beds, marshes and wooded riverbanks rich with red deer, wild boar, gazelles and water buffalo, the Bebr hunted alone, moving almost silently despite its enormous size.

Unlike the leopard that mastered the cliffs or the cheetah that depended upon speed, the tiger ruled through patience, overwhelming strength and absolute power.

It followed its prey through dense vegetation with remarkable stealth before launching a sudden attack that few animals could survive.

Its body was one of nature's greatest masterpieces.

A rich orange coat crossed by bold black stripes blended perfectly among reeds, woodland shadows and golden grasses.

Its broad head, massive shoulders, muscular forelegs and immense jaws made it the largest wild cat ever known in Kurdistan.

Adult males usually weighed **180–240 kilograms**, although exceptional individuals may have exceeded **250 kilograms**.

They measured **2.7–3.1 metres** from nose to the tip of the tail.

Adult females were smaller, usually weighing **100–160 kilograms** and measuring **2.4–2.7 metres** in total length.

Standing nearly **one metre** at the shoulder, the Bebr possessed extraordinary strength and was capable of bringing down fully grown wild boar, red deer and even young water buffalo.

In the wild, the Zagros Tiger usually lived **10–15 years**, while animals protected in captivity could survive **18–22 years**.

Females usually gave birth to **two or three cubs**, although litters of **one to four cubs** were common.

The cubs were born inside dense reed beds, hidden caves or secluded forest shelters where they remained protected during their first weeks of life.

For almost two years they remained beside their mother, learning to stalk, swim, hunt and survive before beginning solitary lives of their own.

The Bebr required vast territories rich in water and prey.

It hunted mainly red deer, wild boar, gazelles, roe deer and occasionally young buffalo, usually during the quiet hours of dawn, dusk and night.

A powerful swimmer, it crossed wide rivers and marshes with ease, ruling the wetlands as confidently as the Pling ruled the mountains.

For thousands of years the Bebr symbolised kingship, courage and unmatched strength.

Ancient Assyrian, Median and Persian rulers admired its power, while Kurdish hunters and shepherds respected the great striped hunter as a rightful part of the wilderness.

But even kings cannot survive when their kingdom disappears.

During the nineteenth century, forests were cleared, wetlands were drained, rivers were altered, settlements expanded and hunting became increasingly widespread.

At the same time, the tiger's natural prey steadily declined.

One by one, the great striped hunters disappeared from Kurdistan's valleys.

The **last scientifically confirmed record of a wild tiger in the Kurdistan region was in 1887**, when a **Caspian Tiger** was killed near **Mosul**, probably after wandering from southeastern Türkiye. No verified wild tiger has been recorded anywhere in Kurdistan since then.

Today, the **Bebrê Kurdistanê** has completely vanished from its ancient homeland.

Unlike the **Plingê Zagrosê**, which still survives in the remote mountains of **Qandil**, **Halgurd**, **Qaradax**, **Bradost**, **Piramagrun**, **Hewraman** and other parts of the Zagros Mountains, the tiger survives only in history, folklore and the memories carried by Kurdish elders.

Its disappearance reminds us that even the strongest creatures cannot survive when forests disappear, rivers are altered and the balance of nature is broken.

When evening mist rises above the Sirwan and the Tigris, and the reeds whisper beneath the wind, some elders still speak of the forgotten king whose roar once echoed across Kurdistan's river valleys.

They quietly say:

**"Bebr çû, lê şanazîya wî her dimîne."**

**"The tiger is gone, but its glory remains."**

*King of the rivers,*

*shadow among the reeds,*

*your roar has fallen silent,*

*but Kurdistan still remembers your name.*

## 🐆 2.54 – Plingê Zagrosê / Plingî Kurdistan (پڵنگێ زاگرۆس / پڵنگی کوردستان)

## — The Zagros Leopard — The Silent Guardian of Kurdistan's Mountains

*(Panthera pardus tulliana)*

The **Plingê Zagrosê**, the Zagros Leopard, has long been the hidden sovereign of Kurdistan's mountains — a silent guardian moving through towering cliffs, ancient oak forests, deep valleys, and rugged peaks of the Zagros range. From the snow-covered summits of **Halgurd**, **Qandil**, **Piramagrun**, **Qaradax**, **Bradost**, **Gara**, **Hewraman**, **Agirî (Mount Ararat)**, **Kirmaşan (Kermashan)**, **Ilam**, **Xoristan (Khuzestan)** and the highlands stretching into eastern Türkiye, the leopard has ruled unseen for thousands of years.

Unlike the cheetah that trusted the open plains, the Pling chose the silence of the mountains.

Very few people have ever seen one.

Most know it only from the sudden alarm of wild goats echoing across steep cliffs, or from a single line of large paw prints left in fresh winter snow.

Patient beyond measure, it hunts with stealth rather than speed.

Hidden among ancient oak trees or resting beneath towering limestone cliffs, it watches the mountains for hours before making a single calculated movement.

When the moment comes, it descends almost without sound, every muscle working in perfect harmony until one powerful leap ends the chase.

Its body is perfectly shaped for life among rocks.

The rich golden coat is covered with dark rosettes that disappear among the shadows of cliffs, forests and autumn leaves.

Broad shoulders, immensely powerful forelegs, a deep chest and a long balancing tail allow it to climb almost vertical rock faces where few other predators can follow.

Unlike most large carnivores, it often carries prey weighing nearly as much as itself high onto rocky ledges or into secluded places beyond the reach of wolves and scavengers.

The Zagros Leopard is the largest leopard living in western Asia.

Adult males usually weigh **50–70 kilograms**, although exceptionally large individuals may reach **90–100 kilograms**. They measure **2.0–2.8 metres** from nose to the tip of the tail.

Adult females usually weigh **35–50 kilograms**, occasionally reaching **60 kilograms**, and measure **1.8–2.4 metres** in total length.

They stand approximately **60–80 centimetres** at the shoulder.

In the wild, the Zagros Leopard usually lives **10–15 years**, while animals protected in captivity may survive for **20–23 years**.

Females normally give birth to **two or three cubs**, although litters of **one to four cubs** are common.

The cubs are born blind inside hidden caves, dense thickets or rocky crevices where they remain under their mother's constant protection.

For almost two years they follow her through the mountains, learning every cliff, every cave, every scent and every hidden path before beginning solitary lives of their own.

The mother alone raises and protects her young.

The Pling requires enormous territories to survive.

A female may occupy **200–400 square kilometres**, while large males may roam over **500–1,000 square kilometres** searching for prey and mates.

Its prey includes wild goats (Bezoar ibex), mouflon, roe deer, wild boar, hares, porcupines, foxes and many smaller mountain animals.

Although capable of reaching speeds of about **58 kilometres per hour**, the leopard depends upon silence, patience, camouflage and overwhelming strength rather than prolonged pursuit.

For thousands of years Kurdish shepherds have regarded the Pling with deep respect rather than fear.

It became a symbol of courage, dignity, wisdom and freedom.

To encounter one was considered a rare blessing that few people would ever experience.

Unlike many great predators that disappeared from Kurdistan, **the Plingê Zagrosê still survives today.**

Although its numbers have declined because of habitat destruction, illegal hunting and the reduction of wild prey, it continues to live in some of the highest and most remote mountains of Kurdistan.

Confirmed populations still inhabit parts of the **Qandil Mountains**, **Halgurd**, **Qaradax**, **Bradost**, **Piramagrun**, **Hewraman**, and the rugged mountain ranges extending through **Kirmaşan**, **Ilam**, and into the highlands around **Agirî**.

Camera traps, wildlife researchers and local mountain communities continue to record its presence, proving that Kurdistan's silent guardian has not vanished.

Scientists believe that **fewer than one thousand mature Zagros Leopards remain throughout their entire natural range**, making every surviving animal one of Kurdistan's greatest living treasures.

Even today, when mist settles across the cliffs of **Qandil**, **Halgurd**, **Qaradax**, and the ancient oak forests of the Zagros Mountains, shepherds still speak of a silent golden shadow passing between the rocks before disappearing into the wilderness.

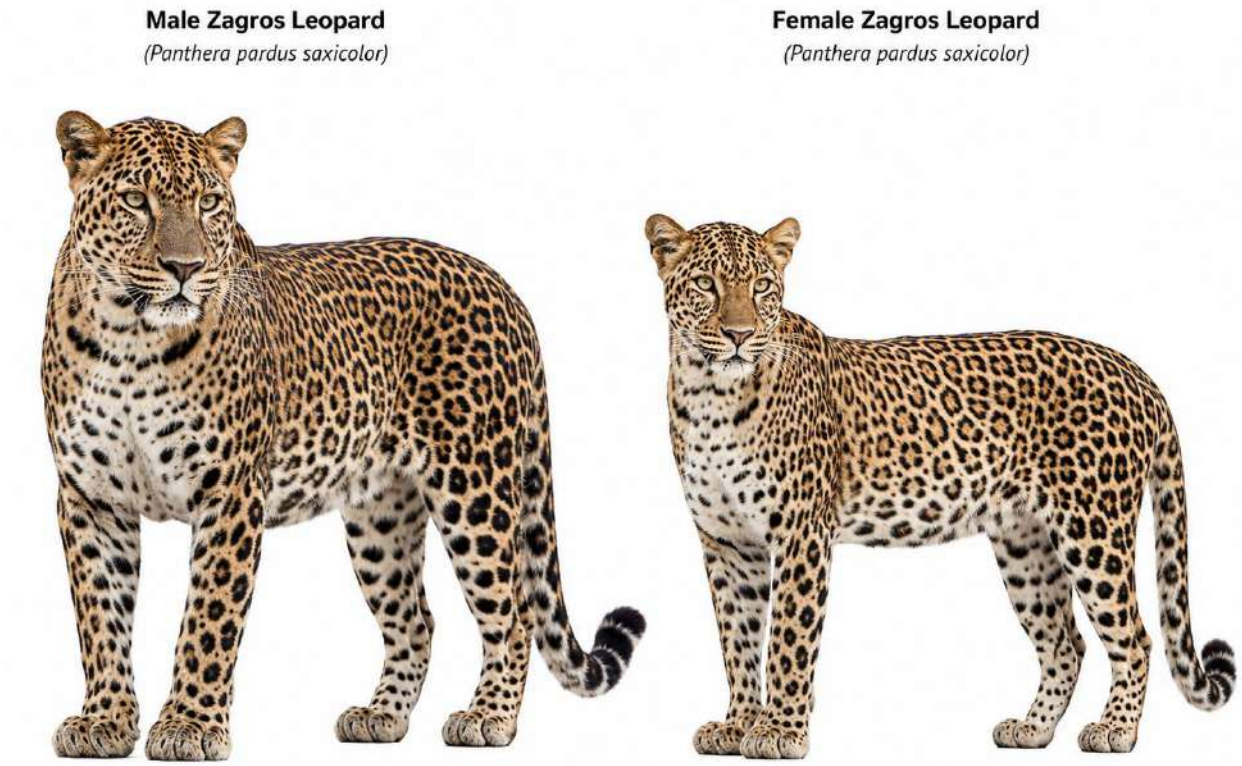
Among Kurdish people, the Pling remains not merely an animal, but a living symbol of the endurance of Kurdistan itself.

Elders still say:

**"Pling naxwêt deng; çiya dengî wî dide."**

**"The leopard makes no sound; the mountains speak for him."**

*Silent among the stones,*
*gold beneath the oaks,*
*guardian of forgotten paths,*
*the mountains still carry your footsteps.*

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## 🐆 2.55- Palêşê Zagrosê / Palêşî Kurdistan (پەلێشی کوردستان / پەلێشێ زاگرۆس)

## — The Asiatic Cheetah — The Vanished Runner of the Highlands (Acinonyx jubatus venaticus)

The **Palêşê Zagrosê**, the Asiatic Cheetah, was once the lightning spirit of the western and southern plains of Kurdistan — a streak of gold racing across the open grasslands of **Kirmaşan (Kermashan), Ilam, Dehloran, Xoristan (Khuzestan), Xorawa (Khorramabad), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle (Kohgiluyeh), Eqbatan (Hamedan)** and the wide river-fed valleys stretching toward **Neynawa (Mosul)** and the soft foothills of **Hewraman, Silemani, and Kalar**.

On the high steppe between the Zagros Mountains and the Mesopotamian lowlands, it lived like a whisper of the wind — quiet, solitary, and breathtakingly fast.

Among the golden reeds and dry plains where gazelles, wild sheep, and hares once flourished, the Palêş hunted with its eyes, not its nose.
It waited in silence, watching, measuring distance and wind, then sprang into a run that few humans ever witnessed.
In those moments, it became pure movement — a flowing ribbon of muscle and dust, touching the earth only lightly before lifting into another stride.

Its body was a masterpiece shaped by the Zagros sun: pale gold fur marked with bold black spots, a slender frame built for speed, long legs, a deep chest, and the famous dark "tear marks" tracing downward from its eyes. These marks helped it see sharply through the blinding heat of **Zagros**, through the shimmering plains near **Kifri, Garmiyan, Mandalî**, and the endless openness between **Ilam and Dehloran**, where summer light burns from dawn to dusk.

The Asiatic cheetah was smaller and finer than its African cousins — 35 to 50 kilograms, standing 70–90 cm tall — but held a grace that made shepherds say it moved like "a prayer running across the earth."

Females raised two to four cubs in hidden rock shelters where acacia shadows cooled the air.
The cubs were fragile, their survival uncertain in a world of wolves, hyenas, and shrinking wilderness.
Cheetahs needed vast territories — sometimes 1,000 kilometres or more — to find enough prey.
They hunted alone or in quiet partnerships at sunrise and sunset, capturing their prey not with claws, but with overwhelming speed: **100 to 115 km per hour**, the fastest land animal ever to touch Kurdistan.

But even the fastest creature cannot outrun loss.

By the 1930s, as villages expanded, as rifles grew louder, and as gazelles disappeared from the plains of **Kirmaşan, Ilam, Xoristan**, and the Sirwan basin, the Palêşê Zagrosê faded from the land.
The last whispers of its presence lingered around **Dehloran and Ilam**, where old herders still remember seeing a golden shadow vanish into the heat.

In Kurdish tales, "Palêş" meant destiny — a being of silence, honour, and uncatchable grace.
Kings of ancient **Assyria and Persia** kept cheetahs for royal hunts, but among Kurdish shepherds, the animal was spoken of with quiet respect, never possession.
Even now, when night falls over the plains of **Ilam** and the stars rise above **Kirmaşan**, elders still say:

**"Palêş çû, lê hêvî man."**
*"The cheetah is gone, but hope remains."*

Today, only a few dozen Asiatic cheetahs survive far to the east, in the deserts of central Iran — distant relatives of the vanished wind that once crossed Kurdistan's plains.

Wind of the plains,
shadow of the sun,
your footprints fade
but the horizon still runs with your name.

## 🦣 2.56- Filê Mesopotamya / Fil (فیل / فیلێ مزۆزپوتامیا) — The Mesopotamian Elephant — The Forgotten Giant of the Rivers (Elephas maximus as)

### 🪶 Status: *Extinct species — vanished over 3,000 years ago from Mesopotamia and southern Kurdistan. The Lost Giant of the Tigris Valleys*.

The **Filê Mezopotamya**, the Mesopotamian Elephant, once moved like a living mountain across the fertile valleys of southern Kurdistan — wandering the soft floodplains of **Khanaqin, Kifri, Garmiyan, Kalar, Mandalî, Xaneqîn**, and the river forests stretching toward **Neynawa (Mosul), Tîsfon (Baghdad)**, and deep into **Xoristan (Khuzestan)** and the wetlands of **Xorawa (Khorramabad), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, and the wide basins that drink from the **Tigris, Diyala, and Sirwan** rivers.
Along the ancient pathways between **Hewraman's foothills, Eqbatan (Hamedan)**, and the lowland plains near **Ilam and Dehloran**, this elephant carried the scent of reeds, warm water, and early civilisation itself.

Smaller than today's Asian elephant but just as majestic, the Filê Mezopotamya stood around **2.5 metres tall**, its ears rounded and its trunk shorter and stronger, built for the woven forests of tamarisk and acacia.
Its skin was slate-grey, sometimes dusted with the red earth of the plains, and its tusks curved forward like polished crescents — gentle arcs of ivory that glowed at sunrise.
It moved with surprising grace for a creature of such size, its heavy steps sinking softly into marshland, leaving footprints that archaeologists still uncover beneath layers of time.

The elephant lived in tight family herds led by a wise matriarch, following the floods of Mesopotamia as the seasons shifted.

They travelled together from river to river, drinking from the deep springs that once threaded through **Kermashan, Ilam**, and the lower valleys leading toward ancient **Sumer and Assyria**.
Their daily rhythm was simple and ancient — graze, bathe, travel, rest — carried by memory older than kings.

In the earliest dawns of civilisation, the Filê Mezopotamya stood beside humanity.
It appears on **Assyrian stone reliefs**, **Sumerian seals**, and the walls of ancient **Nineveh and Tîsfon**, carved with reverence as a creature of power and divine dignity.
Kings captured them for royal hunts, though few hunters ever earned the right to face one.
Even today, old families around **Khanaqin and Mandalî** speak of the "Grey Giant of the Rivers," a spirit believed to guide the souls of rulers across the shadowy bridge of the afterlife.

But no giant, no matter how noble, can stand forever against time.

Overhunting, loss of forests, drying riverways, and a warming climate slowly pushed the Filê Mezopotamya to extinction around **1,000 BC**.
By the time the **Medes** rose in the Zagros mountains, the elephants had already vanished — leaving behind only bones, old river trails, and the echo of their greatness carved in stone.

Yet the rivers remember them.
The soil remembers them.
And the stories of Kurdistan still hold their shadow gently.

The rivers remember your feet,
and the dust still waits for your shadow —
Filê Mezopotamya,
you carried the weight of dawn itself.

## 🐃 2.57- Gamêşa Kêwî / Gamêşî Kêwî (گامێشی کێوی / گامێشا کێوی )

**The Wild Water Buffalo — The Forgotten Guardian of the Marshlands—**

***The Spirit of the Reeds and Rivers-* (*Bubalus arnee kurdistanica*)**

🪶 **Status:** ***Extinct in the wild — once native to the southern marshlands and river valleys of Kurdistan and Mesopotamia. The Wild Water Buffalo of Kurdistan and The Black Spirit of the Rivers.***

The **Gamêşa Kêwî**, the wild water buffalo of Kurdistan, was once one of the most majestic giants of the Mesopotamian plains — a creature of strength, serenity, and ancient memory.
It moved like a dark wave through the wetlands of **Garmian, Kalar, Kifri, Khanaqin, Xaneqîn, Mandalî**, and the wide reed beds of the **Sirwan, Diyala, Tigris, and Little Zab** rivers.
Further south, its shadow cooled the marshes extending toward **Neynawa (Mosul), Tîsfon (Baghdad), Xoristan (Khuzestan), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle (Kohgiluyeh), and Xorawa (Khorramabad)** — a kingdom of water, mud, and shimmering heat.

Standing more than **1.8 metres tall**, with a massive chest and horns curving like twin crescents over a metre long, the wild buffalo was a living symbol of endurance.
Its hide was black and glistening, shining like wet stone when it emerged from the river.
Unlike today's gentle domestic Gâmêş, the Gamêşa Kêwî was untamed and noble — proud, alert, and carrying the whisper of the ancient wetlands on its skin.

It spent long hours submerged in mud pools, cooling its body under the burning Mesopotamian sun.
Herds of twenty to thirty individuals roamed together, guided by a wise older female who knew every curve of the riverbank and every hidden path through reed jungles.
Their low, thunderous calls rolled across the water at sunset, echoing through the warm air like the heartbeat of the land.

For thousands of years, this creature lived side by side with the ancestors of Kurdistan.
It appeared in **Sumerian and Babylonian carvings** as the sacred beast of **water, fertility, and abundance**.
Old Kurdish songs from **Garmian, Khanaqin, and the Sirwan basin** speak of the Gamêşa Kêwî as a guardian of rivers — the one who kept drought at bay and carried blessings in its heavy steps.

But rivers were diverted, marshlands drained, and hunters came with rifles.
By the early 1800s, the wild herds of Kurdistan had faded into silence.
Only their domesticated descendants remain today — humbler, gentler, yet still carrying in their dark eyes the memory of a time when black giants ruled the waters.

You rose from the river,
crowned in mud and sunlight —
a shadow of patience,
a memory of strength.

## 🐻 2.58- Hurîçê Mezin / Xirsê Mezin / Hurîçê Zagrosê

## (ورچی گەورە / ورچی زاگرۆس) —The Brown Giant Bear (Ursus arctos kurdistanicus)

Once upon a time, when the deep oak and walnut forests of **Şaho, Hawraman, and the upper Sirwan valleys** still breathed freely, a giant walked beneath their shadows — the **Great Shaho Bear**, the largest carnivore ever known in the Zagros.
It roamed the rugged heights from **Şaho, Hawraman Takht, Paveh, Merîwan, Sine (Sanandaj), Kirmaşan, and Luristan**, stretching northwards toward the wild forests between **Amedi, Soran, Penjwen, Bradost, and Qandil**, and westwards across the remote valleys of **Mêrdîn, Riha (Urfa), and the foothills once linked to the great Zagros range**.

Local memory calls it *"hirça şevanî Şaho"* —
**the night-thunder of Shaho**,
a creature that shook the mountains with its breath, feared by shepherds yet respected as a spirit of authority and balance.

Standing more than **2.5 metres tall** when rising on its hind legs and weighing nearly **400 kilograms**, it was larger and darker than any other brown bear in the region.
Its thick fur — streaked with deep brown and silver — shone like forged metal when the early sun touched the peaks of **Hawraman, Shaho, and the Sirwan gorges**.

The Great Shaho Bear was not merely an animal;
it was an **ancestral presence**,
a mountain king whose shadow meant the forests were still alive.

For Kurdish villagers, it was a symbol of protection and justice.
If someone harmed the land, cut trees without need, or killed animals wastefully, they said:

**“Hirça Şaho dê lê bibîne”**

— *The Shaho Bear will see you.*

In the living world of the Zagros, it was the apex guardian —
scattering seeds as it dug for roots,
keeping herds of wild goats in check,
and cleaning the forests by consuming carrion.

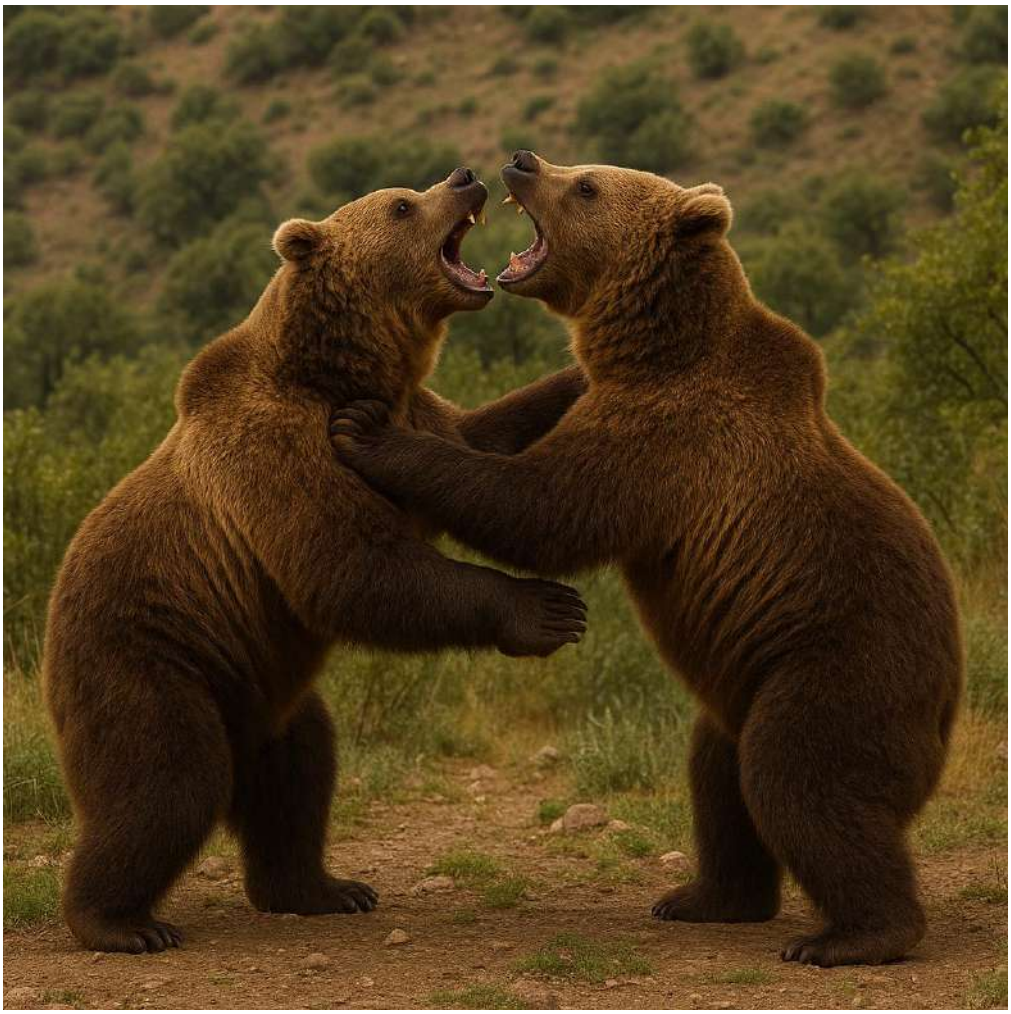
But the mountains changed.
By the late 1800s, rifles, deforestation, and expanding livestock pushed it deeper into the shrinking pockets of wilderness.
The last confirmed presence of this great bear was recorded around **1910–1920 near Hawraman Takht**, after which the forests fell silent.

Today, a few large brown bears still wander the higher Zagros of **Hawraman, Shaho, Sine, Merîwan, Bradost, and Qandil**, perhaps distant cousins of the vanished giant — echoes of a lineage that once dominated the land.

Yet the Great Shaho Bear has never truly disappeared.
It lives in Kurdish proverbs,
in names carved into cliffs and springs,
in stories told by old shepherds under lantern light.

To this day, the expression
**“Bawê Hirîçê Şaho”**
— *Father of the Shaho Bear* —
is spoken to honour courage, endurance, and an unbroken spirit.

Your roar has faded,
but the mountains still carry your footprints —
in tree roots, in wind-worn stones,
in every silence that waits for dawn.



## 🌄 2.59- Final Reflection – The Heartbeat of the Mountains

*(دڵەی شاخەکان – The Living Pulse of Kurdistan)*

Beneath the wide skies of Kurdistan, where oak forests breathe and rivers remember their ancient paths, the **mammals of this land** move like living echoes of time.
They are the strength in the soil, the warmth in the wind, and the eyes through which the mountains still dream.

From the **leopard of the cliffs** to the **ibex upon the ridges**, from the **wolf's midnight cry** to the **brown bear's heavy tread**, each carries a spark of the wild soul that built this land long before cities, borders, or names.
They walk the same paths as our ancestors once did, drinking from the same streams, resting beneath the same stars.

Their blood runs deep — **not just through their veins, but through the earth itself**.
When a fox calls from the valley, or a herd of deer passes like moving light through the trees, the land breathes with them.
They remind us that life is not confined to humanity — it is shared, ancient, and unbroken.

Many of their kind have vanished — the **lion of the plains**, the **cheetah of the wind**, the **wild buffalo of the reeds** — yet their shadows linger, soft and sacred, in the stories told around village fires and mountain springs.
Even in absence, they speak — their silence teaching us reverence.

To know Kurdistan is to know its living creatures — not as possessions, but as kin.
Each heartbeat among them is a pulse in the heart of the land itself.

So when we walk among the hills, and see a herd grazing, a jackal passing, or an eagle circling far above,
let us remember that the wild still trusts us enough to remain.

And when we listen closely to the breath of the wind through the grass, we may still hear them whisper:

“We are the heartbeat of these mountains.
Protect us, and you protect yourself.”

# 🦎 Section 3 – Reptiles and Amphibians of Kurdistan

## *(Qalxokekan û Zendekan / خشۆکەکانی کوردستان)*

### Ancient blood of the earth — quiet guardians of stone and water

Hidden beneath the warmth of rocks, beside quiet springs, and along the dusty paths of the valleys, live some of the oldest children of the earth — the reptiles and amphibians of Kurdistan. They are the silent keepers of balance, the unseen rhythm of life that moves between stone and shadow. Though often overlooked, they have been here since before the mountains rose, carrying within them the ancient memory of the land itself.

In the sunlit deserts of Khanaqin, Mawat, and Kirkuk, **lizards** flash across the sand like sparks of light. Their scales shimmer with the colours of the soil — bronze, olive, and gold — blending perfectly with their surroundings. Among them, the **Kurdish rock lizard** (*qalxokê çiyayan*) is a true emblem of resilience, thriving on the steep cliffs where few other creatures survive. Its ability to vanish into stone reflects the spirit of Kurdistan itself: enduring, adaptable, and quietly strong.

In the warmer southern plains and near ancient ruins, the **desert monitor** roams — powerful, intelligent, and unhurried. Known locally as *varanê çiya*, it is both feared and respected for its strength and sharp awareness. Villagers once believed that it guarded buried treasures beneath the sands and that to harm one would bring misfortune. In truth, these reptiles are valuable protectors of balance, feeding on pests and cleansing the land of decay.

Among the riverbanks and wetlands of Darbandikhan, Dukan, and Sirwan dwell the **marsh turtles** and **toads**, creatures that bridge two worlds — land and water. The **Euphrates softshell turtle** (*kûrê avê*) glides through rivers that have flowed since the time of Sumer and Elam, while the **green toad** and **tree frog** sing their evening songs

after the spring rains, their voices echoing across the still water like forgotten lullabies. Their presence marks the purity of the land, for where they thrive, the water remains alive and clean.

The **snakes** of Kurdistan, though feared by many, are among the most fascinating symbols of this ancient ecosystem. From the harmless **whip snake** and **rat snake**, guardians of fields and barns, to the more formidable **mountain viper** (*marê zaxrîn*), each plays a vital role in maintaining nature's harmony. In old Kurdish folklore, the snake is not only a creature of danger but also of wisdom — a guardian of hidden truths and a protector of sacred places. Some tribes once left offerings of milk near cave mouths in respect for the "snake spirit" believed to keep the village safe from drought or disease.

In the cooler, forested zones of Hawraman and Rawanduz, **salamanders** and **newts** hide beneath moss and leaf-litter, their smooth skin glistening after rain. These delicate amphibians are living proof that Kurdistan's mountains hold both fire and water within their soul — volcanic stone above, and springs of life below.

Together, these reptiles and amphibians form a quiet yet essential chorus within Kurdistan's wild heart. They control the balance between insect and soil, between death and renewal. Their lives may pass unnoticed, yet without them, the chain of life would weaken.

To watch a lizard bask on an ancient wall, a turtle glide through the reeds, or a viper slip silently into a crack of stone, is to glimpse the continuity of time itself. They are living fossils of Kurdistan's memory — survivors of drought, flood, and war — asking nothing but a space to live and a little sun upon the rock.

Preserving them means preserving the oldest chapter of our homeland's story — one written not in words, but in scales, shells, and silent patience.

These humble yet noble creatures remind us that life's beauty often lies not in sound or splendour, but in stillness — in the warm silence of the rocks, in the cool breath of the river, and in the eternal dance of survival between earth and sky.

## 🐍 3.1- Marê Zagros / Marê Çiyayî / Marê Berdan / Marê Kurdistanê

**(مارێ زاگرۆس / مارێ چیایی / مارێ بەردان / مارێ کوردستان)**

## — Zagros Viper / Kurdistan Mountain Viper (Montivipera raddei kurdistanica)

**The Ancient Spirit of Stone and Sun (Montivipera wagneri)**

Among the sun-warmed cliffs of **Hewraman (Avroman), Şaho, Soran, Rawanduz, Penjwen, Garan, Şarezûr, Colemêrg (Hakkarî), Wan, Riha, Dersim, Çewlîk (Bingöl), Bêdlês, Botan, Mêrdîn, Erzingan, Erzerom, Qers, Agirî, Arta (Ardahan), Rîndik (Iğdır), Artvîn, Bayburt** and the rocky shoulders of **Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan, Xorawa, Eqbatan (Hamedan), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle (Kohgiluye-Boyerrahmat), Xoristan**, there lives a creature older than memory — the **Marê Zagros**, the viper of the Zagros Mountains.

It moves with quiet purpose between cracks of limestone and the shadows of boulders, where grass and stone hold an ancient agreement with the wind. The viper prefers **high altitudes from 1,200 to nearly 3,000 meters**, where winters bury the mountains for months and summers last only long enough for life to breathe.
With the first warmth of spring, it rises from hibernation to bask on flat rocks, coiled like a living ornament wrought by the mountains themselves.

Despite its reputation, the Marê Zagros is cautious and avoids conflict. It strikes only when provoked or cornered. Its venom is not aggression — it is survival. It feeds on the small lives of the hillside: **mice, voles, lizards, and large insects**, keeping the balance of the fragile highland ecosystem that depends on predators that ask for little yet give so much.

Its body is a masterpiece of camouflage — **ash-grey, golden brown, patterned with broken zigzags** that mirror the fractured stones of its homeland. Adults grow **70–90 cm**, with a broad, triangular head and amber eyes that glow like embers beneath the rock.

Its movements are slow and deliberate, but when threatened it coils with a hiss that sounds like dry wind scraping across stone.

When the snow melts and spring softens the earth, mating begins. After the long sleep of winter, life awakens in the cliffs. Females give birth to **4–8 live young**, already equipped with fangs and instinct. They grow slowly, reaching adulthood after three years, often returning to the same rocky slopes where they were born.
Mountain villagers call this loyalty **“kêşeka welatê xwe”** — the serpent’s belonging to its homeland.

In Kurdish folklore, the viper is feared and respected in equal measure. Shepherds call it **“mîrê çiyayê”** — *the prince of the mountains* — for its calm power and quiet authority. Old healers believed the Marê Zagros guarded medicinal herbs and sacred springs, a sentinel placed by the mountains to protect wisdom.
It was said that killing a viper without reason brought drought, for the serpent was believed to keep the earth’s warmth alive.

Today, this ancient creature stands near the edge. **Habitat loss, illegal collection, climate change, and quarrying** threaten the rocky sanctuaries it calls home. Yet in hidden valleys of **Hewraman, Şaho, Colemêrg, Wan, and Baxtiyarî**, its shimmering eyes still greet the dawn, a reminder that some spirits of the land endure as long as the mountains endure.

*You are the whisper of the stones,*
*the slow breath of mountains.*
*Where others fear your name,*
*the earth calls you its oldest child.*

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## 3.2- Marê Tîj (ماری تیژ) — Kurdistan Whip Snake / The Runner of the Sunlit Rocks (Hierophis schmidti kurdistanicus)

Across the sunlit slopes of **Duhok**, **Akre**, **Barzan**, **Soran**, **Hewlêr (Erbil)**, **Koye**, and the dry river valleys stretching toward **Garmiyan**, **Kifri**, and the foothills of **Kirmashan**, a flash of gold cuts through stone and grass — too quick to grasp, too graceful to forget. This is the **Marê Tîj**, the Golden Whip Snake of Kurdistan, the swift wanderer of hills, plains, olive groves, and riverbanks.

It thrives where the sun is strong and the land is open.
At dawn, it glides from beneath stones warmed by the night, lifting its head above the ground with a regal stillness, surveying the world like a watchful guardian.
Unlike venomous serpents, the Marê Tîj carries no poison — its strength lies in speed, balance, and an instinct sharpened by centuries under the Kurdish sun.
It hunts with breathtaking precision, chasing lizards, young birds, and small rodents in

bursts so fast that the eye barely follows.
Yet despite its power, it avoids humans, disappearing in a flash of motion at the slightest disturbance.

Long and slender, it can reach **1.5 to 2 meters** — a living ribbon of light.
Its scales shimmer in hues of **olive-gold, grey, and bronze**, catching the morning sun like ripples on water.
Its head is narrow, its eyes bright amber, filled with a curious intelligence.
When it moves, it flows — smooth, silent, and fluid, as though the land itself were stretching into motion.

In the warmth of late spring, males and females meet in a delicate dance of coils and circles, weaving their bodies in a ritual older than the mountains around them.
The female lays **6–10 eggs** in soft soil or under flat rocks, where the earth holds its warmth.
By midsummer, tiny serpents hatch — already fast, already alive with alertness — and begin their solitary lives.
The Marê Tîj lives nearly **a decade**, hibernating deep beneath the ground during the cold months.

In Kurdish folklore, this serpent is not feared but respected.
It is seen as a creature of awareness, speed, and renewal — the soft-spoken protector of crops and fields.
Farmers and shepherds once said:

**“Marê Tîj, xêra çiyayê ye.”**
*“The swift snake is the blessing of the mountain.”*

For it keeps pests in balance and moves with a clean, honest purpose — a guardian of the living land.

Though still common across many regions, its numbers slowly decline due to roads cutting through its territories and the shrinking of wild spaces.

Its survival matters — for where the Marê Tîj moves, the ecosystem breathes in harmony.

*You move like thought across the stones —*
*a flash of gold,*
*a whisper of life*
*the mountain never forgets.*

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## 3.3- Marê Reş (مارێ ڕەش) — Large Black Snake / The Black Whip Snake of Kurdistan (Dolichophis jugularis)

Across the warm farmlands of **Zaxo**, **Duhok**, **Amedi**, **Barzan**, **Soran**, and the terraced olive groves of **Erbil**, the meadows of **Koye**, and the wide plains stretching toward **Halabja**, **Silemanî**, **Kifri**, **Garmiyan**, **Xaneqîn**, **Ilam**, and **Kirmashan**, there moves a creature of quiet dignity — the **Marê Reşê**, the great black serpent of Kurdistan.

It glides with an unhurried grace rarely seen in the wild.
Where other snakes rush in fear or strike in panic, the Marê Reşê moves like a patient thought — slow, steady, deliberate, aware of its strength and the land beneath it.
It prefers open daylight, basking on sun-warmed stones or weaving between grass stems as it searches for mice, rats, lizards, and small birds.
Farmers know its value, for it keeps granaries safe from pests.
Children are told: *“Do not fear the black one; it is the farmer’s ally.”*

When dusk falls, it slips quietly beneath large stones, into old walls, or down burrows dug long ago by foxes and hedgehogs.
If approached too closely, it lifts its head with regal calm and breathes a soft hiss — a warning, a boundary, but never an attack.
It is a serpent of peace, not harm.

Large and magnificent, the Marê Reşê can exceed **2.5 meters**, its body shining like polished obsidian under the Kurdish sun.
Adults are deep, reflective black — the colour of old wisdom — while the young begin life in shades of brown and olive, slowly darkening as they mature.
Its head is narrow, its golden eyes gentle, round-pupilled, glowing like embers beneath a shadow.

In late spring, males and females meet briefly.
The female lays **8–15 eggs** in warm, sheltered earth, and by midsummer the young emerge — slender, pale, curious.
They darken with each passing season, walking the slow path toward their noble adult beauty.
In quiet rural places, the Marê Reşê may live **15–20 years**, moving through the same fields, the same stone walls, as though keeping an ancient promise to the land.

Among Kurdish villagers, this great serpent carries a unique respect.
It was once taboo to kill it.
People believed it protected their crops, their food stores, even their homes.
Farmers still call it **“Hevalê xêrê axê”** — *the good friend of the soil.*

Some say that if a Marê Reşê chooses to rest near your house, the home will never be without grain.
Shepherds tell stories of a black serpent that returned each spring, following them along the same mountain routes year after year — a gentle spirit of the field, not a threat.

Its shed skin was sometimes placed above doorways, believed to guard the home with quiet strength.
Not fear, but honour — this was the old relationship between Kurdish people and the Marê Reşê.

Today, it survives across many regions but suffers from fear and misunderstanding.
Many are killed simply because they are large.
Yet this serpent carries no venom.
It carries balance.
It carries peace.

To see one in a Kurdish field is not a danger — it is the earth breathing calmly.

*Shadow of sunlight,*
*you move between fear and peace.*
*Slow heart of the soil,*
*the land whispers your name in thanks.*

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## 🪱 3.4- Marê Sor / Marê Sûr (مارێ سوور) — Red Fast Snake / The Red Snake of Kurdistan (Platyceps rhodorachis)

Across the sun-baked hills of **Khanaqin**, **Kifri**, **Halabja**, **Hawraman**, **Penjwen**, **Garmiyan**, the valleys near **Kalar**, and the warm eastern plains stretching toward **Sine**, **Kirmashan**, **Ilam**, and the borders of **Loristan**, there flashes a creature as quick as fire — the **Marê Sor**, the red serpent of Kurdistan.

Where the **Marê Reşê** moves with calm wisdom, the Marê Sor moves like a spark carried by the wind.
Its world is one of heat, speed, and sunlight — the dry plains, stony slopes, and open valleys where every movement leaves a trail of dust behind.
Villagers say: **“Marê Sor diçete rêya rojê”** — *the red snake runs with the sun.*

And truly, it seems born from daylight itself, a streak of copper vanishing before a shadow can fall upon the ground.

It is non-venomous, relying only on its astonishing quickness.
It darts between stones, chases lizards with precision, and bursts across footpaths in a blur of red.
On hot afternoons, when the land breathes slow under the weight of heat, you might glimpse it basking briefly — a moment of still fire — before it disappears again into grass and dust.

Slender and elegant, the Marê Sor grows **1 to 1.5 meters**, its body glowing in shades of copper-red, bronze, and rust like embers stirring beneath the sun.
Its underside is pale cream, and the light dancing over its scales gives it the look of living flame.
The head is narrow, the eyes alert, carrying the sharpness of a hunter that knows its place in the world.

In spring and early summer, males and females circle and slip around each other in a silent dance before mating.
The female lays **4–10 eggs** in soft, warm soil or under stones where the heat of Kurdistan nurtures the life within.
By early autumn, the young emerge — tiny streaks of gold and flame — already swift, already learning the rhythm of the land.
A Marê Sor may live **10–12 years**, especially in lands where roads and human expansion have not yet cut across its path.

In Kurdish folklore, this serpent is a symbol of **energy, courage, and determination**.
It is said that dreaming of a red snake gives strength to overcome fear.
Because of its connection to heat and sun, many believed it brought **vitality and good harvests**, carrying the fire of life across the land.
Others avoided harming it, thinking its colour meant it was “the messenger of fire” — a creature touched by elemental spirit.

Today the Marê Sor is still scattered across southern and eastern Kurdistan, but its numbers shrink each year.
Road deaths, habitat loss, and expanding farmland have taken their toll.
Yet this serpent is harmless to people and a faithful hunter of pests — a quiet friend of the soil.

To see one streak across a Kurdish hillside is to witness the land's own heartbeat — fast, bright, and alive.

*Child of the sun,*
*your scales burn with the memory of day.*
*Swift as thought,*
*you vanish before shadow learns your name.*

## 🐍3.5- Marê Gûllî (مارێ گوڵی) — Spotted Mountain Viper / The Spotted Viper of Kurdistan (Montivipera latifii kurdistanica)

High among the stone-crowned ridges of **Shaho**, **Hawraman**, **Rawanduz**, and the central belts of the **Zagros**, where wind cuts cold even in summer and wild tulips burn red against pale rock, the **Marê Gûllî** lives in silence.
It is a creature of high altitude — roaming slopes between **1,800 and 3,000 meters**, where the earth breathes thin and the mountains hold their secrets tightly.
In these lofty meadows, scattered with loose stones and bursts of gûll (wild flowers), this viper moves like a shifting shadow, merging perfectly with the colours of the land.

It is active in the early morning and late afternoon, resting during the fierce midday sun.
Here it waits quietly, motionless for long hours, hunting lizards, mice, and insects that wander too close.
Though venomous, it is calm by nature — striking only when threatened or cornered.
Because it blends so beautifully with blooming meadows, Kurdish villagers say:

**“Marê gûllî wek gûlê axê ye.”**
*“The flowered snake is like the flower of the earth.”*

Small but breathtaking, the Marê Gûllî grows **40–60 cm** long, its body thick and sturdy.
Olive, grey, and brown scales wrap around its form, marked with dark circular spots like petals scattered across stone.
Its wide triangular head and glowing amber eyes give it a regal presence, the silent authority of a creature born between cliffs and thunder.

When winter snow melts and spring breathes again into the Zagros, the vipers rise from their long sleep.
Males perform ancient rituals, lifting their bodies and intertwining without biting — a dance of strength and pride.

Females give birth to **5–10 live young** in midsummer, each one already patterned like a tiny mountain jewel, beginning life among flowers and stone.

In Kurdish folklore, the Marê Gûllî holds a powerful place.
It is often called **“Şahê Çiyayê”** — *the King of the Mountain* — for its rare beauty and quiet, deadly grace.
Many believed it was born from a tulip struck by lightning, carrying a spark of the mountain spirit in its skin.
Encountering one is considered a moment of destiny: if your heart is calm and respectful, the mountains will open their path for you.

Today, this serpent is tragically rare, surviving only in the most remote untouched ridges of the Zagros.
Illegal collection, climate change, and shrinking alpine habitats threaten its existence.
To protect it is to protect the fragile, sacred balance of Kurdistan’s highest places.

*Flower of stone,*
*your breath holds thunder and silence.*
*In your stillness,*
*the mountain dreams of fire and snow.*

## 🐍 3.6- Marê Spî (ماری سپی) — White Snake / The White Snake of Kurdistan (Eirenis modestus kurdistanica)

Among the stone walls, abandoned ruins, and quiet gardens of **Erbil**, **Amedi**, **Silemani**, **Sanandaj**, and the warm foothills of the central Zagros, there glides a creature the Kurdish people have long cherished — the **Marê Spî**, the White Snake.
Unlike most serpents, it prefers places touched by human life: village wells, garden edges, low stone terraces warmed by morning sun.
It moves softly at dawn and dusk, weaving between rocks in search of small insects, spiders, or lizards, keeping pests under control without ever disturbing the peace.

Calm by nature, it shows no fear of people.
Farmers see it as a companion — a quiet guardian of the fields and orchards.
When approached, this gentle snake does not strike; instead it curls in silence, tucking its head beneath its body as if choosing peace over harm.
For this reason, villagers often say the Marê Spî is “the snake that prays,” a creature whose presence brings calm to the land.

Slender and elegant, it grows **40–60 cm** long.
Its scales shimmer in pale tones of silver, ivory, or light beige, with faint brown lines tracing its back like delicate brushstrokes.
Its underside is pure white — smooth and bright as river-polished stone — giving the snake its name.
Under Kurdish sunlight, its body gleams faintly, as though dusted with moonlight, and its soft amber eyes hold a rare gentleness.

When summer begins, the Marê Spî lays **3–6 eggs** beneath warm stones or in loose earth.
The hatchlings emerge in late August, no longer than a finger, already gliding through the world with the shy grace of their kind.
They grow quickly and reach adulthood within two years, living up to a decade among

gardens and fields.
Feeding almost entirely on insects, this small snake quietly protects the balance of the earth beneath our feet.

In Kurdish folklore, the Marê Spî is a symbol of purity and blessing.
People once believed it carried the light of angels and that harming it brought sorrow to a household.
An old saying remains part of village memory:

**“Marê spî rêyê xêrê nîşe.”**
*“The white snake marks the path of good fortune.”*

Some elders say that if one crosses your path, a visitor will soon arrive bringing good news from afar.
Its calm presence near Kurdish homes has long been a reminder that peace can live even in the smallest, quietest forms of life.

Today, it remains fairly common, yet many are killed by mistake — victims of fear rather than understanding.
But the Marê Spî is entirely harmless, a friend of the land, a soft-bodied keeper of balance.

*White shadow of peace,*
*you move without fear or sound —*
*the earth exhales,*
*and light follows your passing.*

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## 🪱 3.7- Marê Kitik / Mar Kitke / Marê Du Serê (مار کتکە / ماری دوو سەر)

### — Two-Headed Worm Snake / The Earth’s Secret Snake (Typhlops / Xerotyphlops vermicularis)

In the soft earth of **Silemani**, the lower slopes of **Hawraman**, the fertile gardens of **Hewlêr**, the humid soils around **Sanandaj**, and the foothills near **Mahabad** and **Kermashan**, there lives a creature so small and secretive that most Kurds only glimpse it after heavy spring rain — the **Marê Kitik**, the “little snake,” the whisper of the underground.

To villagers, it has always been mysterious.
Because its head and tail look almost the same, many believed it had **two heads**, able to move forward and backward with equal certainty — a symbol of duality, of beginnings and endings touching each other.
But the truth is gentler: it is a tiny blind snake, a harmless spirit of the soil that spends nearly its entire life tunnelling beneath the earth.
It glides through the darkness like a thread of living dusk, searching for ant eggs, termites, and soft larvae that feed the hungry earth.

Only when rain floods the ground does it rise to the surface, confused by the sudden wetness, shining like a piece of rose-coloured metal left on the soil by the mountain spirits.

Small — only **15–25 cm** — the Marê Kitik hardly looks like a snake at all.
Its skin glows in smooth shades of **violet-grey**, **rose-brown**, or **bronze**, reflecting light like polished silk.
The head and tail are nearly identical, though the tail ends in a small rounded point used for digging.
Its eyes are tiny dots beneath its scales, sensing only light and shadow — enough for a life lived in darkness.

Deep below the roots, females lay **1–3 eggs**, hidden from all eyes.
Tiny, almost transparent hatchlings emerge and immediately begin to burrow, joining the quiet labour of the soil.
A Marê Kitik may live **5–8 years**, though few humans ever see more than one or two in their entire lives.

In Kurdish folklore, it is a creature of balance and humility — **Marê axê**, the snake of the earth.
Some elders say it guards the border between worlds: the living roots above and the forgotten stones below.
Children are taught that if you find one, you must return it gently to the soil, because "**it**

**belongs to the roots, not the surface**."

Its presence is seen as a blessing, a sign that the land is fertile, awake, and breathing.

Though common, it is threatened by **chemical farming**, **heavy machinery**, and **polluted soils**.

Yet it plays a quiet but vital role — keeping the earth clean, turning the soil, feeding life from below.

*Born of dust,*

*you see without seeing.*

*Your silence keeps the roots alive,*

*your breath makes the soil dream.*

## 🐍 3.8- Marê Awê / Marê Avê (مارێ ئاوی / ماری ئاوی) — Large Water Snake / The Great River Snake of Kurdistan (Natrix tessellata)

Along the winding rivers of **Sirwan**, the clear pools of **Little Zab**, the quiet marshes of **Darbandixan**, and the shaded irrigation canals that cut through Kurdish farmlands, lives one of the most graceful creatures of the land — the **Marê Awê**, the Water Snake. It belongs to the rivers as fish do, moving with the current as if the water itself had grown a living thread.

Most of its life is spent in or beside water, gliding silently with only its head above the surface.
It dives, twists, and swims with astonishing control, chasing fish, frogs, and tadpoles through reeds and underwater shadows.
Though often feared, it is completely harmless to humans — a non-venomous hunter whose presence keeps rivers clean and balanced.
In warm afternoons it stretches out on riverbanks or tree branches that lean low over the water, absorbing the sun before slipping back beneath the surface with barely a ripple.

Long and powerful, the Marê Awê can reach **1.5 meters**, its scales shining in shades of olive-green, dark grey, or brown.
Behind the head lies its most beautiful mark — a bright **yellow or white collar**, a natural necklace that gives the species its distinct identity.
Its round, alert eyes see the world above and below the surface at once, and when the sun touches its wet skin, it gleams like polished stone — a creature both earthly and mythic.

In spring, when the rivers swell with melted snow, males and females meet to mate.
The female lays **10–30 eggs** in moist soil near the riverbank, hiding them under roots or reeds.
After two months, the young emerge and swim instinctively, their tiny bodies cutting the water with the same quiet elegance as their parents.

They may live up to **15 years**, spending winters in deep burrows near river edges where the earth stays warm.

In Kurdish folklore, the Marê Awê is known as **“Parêzkarê Çemê” — the Guardian of the River**.
Villagers once believed that every pure spring had a water snake watching over it, protecting it from pollution and wandering spirits.
And there is an old saying:

**“Marê awê nabe jê awê xwe derkeve.”**
*“The water snake never poisons its own water.”*

It is a symbol of loyalty, protection, and the river’s power to safeguard life.
Wherever this snake lives, the water is said to be alive, flowing, and full of blessing.

Today, the Marê Awê still swims across much of Kurdistan, but its world is shrinking. Pollution, dams, and human fear endanger a creature that has never harmed us — a quiet guardian that only asks for clean water and peace.

*River shadow,*
*you glide between light and silence —*
*the heart of water*
*remembers your song.*

## 🦎 3.9- Qalxokê Kurdistanê (قەڵخۆکێ کوردستان)— Kurdistan Agama / The Mountain Lizard of the Zagros (Paralaudakia kurdistanica)

The Qalxokê Kurdistanê is one of the most familiar and beloved reptiles of the Kurdish highlands — the small guardian of sunlit stones. It thrives in the warm, bright cliffs of **Şaho, Hewraman (Avroman), Amedî, Soran, Rawanduz, Penjwen, Şarezûr, Duhok, Barzan, Zaxo**, and along the rugged terraces of **Colemerg (Hakkarî), Wan, Riha, Botan, Mêrdîn, Çewlîk (Bingöl), Dersim, Erzingan, Erzerom, Qers, Agirî, Rîndik (Iğdır), Arta (Ardahan), Artvîn, Bayburt**, as well as the stony slopes of **Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan, Xorawa (Khorramabad), Eqbatan (Hamedan), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle (Kohgiluyeh-Boyerrahmat), Xoristan (Khuzestan)** and the sun-baked walls of **Rojava — Afrin, Kobanê, Qamişlo, Derik, Hesekê, Dilok (Antep), Semîsat (Adıyaman), Xarpêt (Elazığ)**.

Wherever stone meets sunlight, the Qalxokê makes its world.

From early morning, it climbs to the highest rock of its territory, lying motionless with half-closed eyes as the mountain air warms its body. Yet this stillness is only a mask — when danger nears, it bursts into motion, darting across stone with a speed that surprises even shepherds who grew up watching it.
It is a creature of daylight, feeding on **ants, beetles, spiders, and countless small insects** that swarm the highlands, quietly helping villages by keeping pests under control.
When the afternoon heat becomes fierce, the Qalxokê slips into crevices or beneath flat stones, returning only when the golden light softens.

Its beauty lies in the harmony between its skin and the land. The scales shimmer in tones of **sand, grey, olive, and soft blues**, colours painted by the mountains themselves. During the mating season, males blaze with a **bright blue throat and golden back**, becoming living sparks of sunlight against the stone.
Adults reach **25–35 cm**, slender and long-tailed, their tails serving as perfect

counterweights on steep cliffs. When threatened they raise their heads, bob their bodies, and flick their tails — a warning, but also a proud choreography of survival.

With the return of spring warmth, males display rapid “push-up” movements on sunlit rocks to attract females. After mating, females hide **6–10 eggs** beneath warm stones or in shallow burrows.
By midsummer, tiny hatchlings emerge, already swift and curious — small guardians of stone, born under the sun’s blessing.
A Qalxokê can live **7–10 years**, wandering the same walls, terraces, and rocky paths throughout its life.

To Kurdish villagers, the Qalxokê is a cheerful neighbour. Children call it **qizê taf — “the daughter of the sun”**, because it follows sunlight across the stones like a living ray. In many villages it is seen as harmless and lucky; its presence near a home is said to bring warmth, prosperity, and safe summers.
Because it can drop its tail and grow a new one, elders say it symbolises **renewal, survival, and the endless patience of the mountains**.

Though still common in most of Kurdistan, **quarrying, road-building, and destruction of rocky slopes** threaten some local populations. Yet the Qalxokê adapts — living on house walls, garden edges, and village paths. It is a small, enduring reflection of the Kurdish land: quiet, bright, resilient, woven into the stones themselves.

*Sun-walker,*
*your skin remembers fire.*
*Each rock you touch*
*becomes a heartbeat of the mountain.*

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## 🦎 3.10- Sirmazele (سەرمازەڵە)— Kurdistan Fringe-Toed Lizard (Acanthodactylus)

The Sermazele is one of the most familiar and lively reptiles of the Kurdish lowlands and warm plains, a tiny guardian of open earth and golden dust. It lives wherever the sun embraces the land — across the wheat fields of **Kirkuk, Kalar, Garmiyan, Chamchamal, Kifri, Jalawla, Khanaqin**, and the wide terraces stretching toward

**Makhmur, Mexmûrê Qadime, Mosul (Neynawa), Tîsfon (Baghdad)** and the **Zagros foothills**.
It also thrives in the warmer soils of **Kirmaşan, Xorawa (Khorramabad), Eqbatan (Hamedan), Baxtiyarî, Xoristan**, and across the northern plains of **Riha (Şanlıurfa), Dilok (Antep), Semîsat (Adıyaman), Mêrdîn, Amed, Sêrt, Şirnex, Êlû (Batman), Botan**, and the dry countryside of **Rojava — Qamişlo, Kobanê, Hesekê, Afrin, Derik, Cindirês**.

Where the land is dry, open, and shimmering with heat, the Sermazele lifts its tiny body above the burning soil — a posture so iconic that Kurds named it after this habit:
**Sermazele — "the one who raises its head."**
It perches on blades of grass, small rocks, even pebbles still warm from the morning sun, balancing lightly as if listening to distant footsteps.
Every movement is alert and quick. At the slightest sound, it flashes into motion, vanishing down a burrow or beneath roots. But when the land is quiet, it stands tall and motionless, watching its world with bright, curious eyes.

Delicate yet perfectly adapted, the Sermazele reaches **15–20 cm** in length, slender-bodied with long expressive limbs. Its colour mirrors the plains — pale beige, faint brown, sometimes touched by soft orange or blue along the neck when spring awakens its pride.
Its skin is smooth yet resilient, built to endure heat, wind, and drifting sand. Its triangular head turns rapidly from side to side, as if in conversation with the breeze.

Active in the gentle hours after sunrise and before sunset, the Sermazele spends its days patrolling its little kingdom. It feeds on **ants, beetles, tiny grasshoppers, spiders**, and anything that moves with the whisper of life. Its hunting is swift and precise. Males guard small territories, nodding rhythmically in a behaviour villagers call **ser-hezân** — *"head dancing"* — a warning to rivals and a proud display to the world.

When spring warms the plains, males brighten with subtle colours to attract mates. The female lays **3–6 eggs** in soft, sandy earth, hiding them beneath grasses or stones. After **6–8 weeks**, the young emerge — miniature shadows of their parents, already fast,

clever, and independent.
They grow quickly, learning the rhythms of wind, dust, and footsteps — the lessons of the plains.

To Kurdish folk culture, the Sermazele is more than a lizard; it is a symbol of alertness and quick thinking. Calling someone **“Sermazele”** is to praise their sharp mind and careful awareness.
Children chase it with laughter in the spring fields, yet elders always warn them not to harm it, for it is a helper of farmers — an eater of pests, a friend of crops, a quiet keeper of balance.
Seeing a Sermazele near a field is considered a sign of **healthy soil and a good harvest**.

Though still widespread, the Sermazele faces dangers from expanding farms, pesticides, and the loss of natural land. Yet, as long as dry plains breathe and the sun warms the stones of Kurdistan, this little lizard will continue to rise on its long legs — a bright spark of life in the silence of the earth.

*Child of the sun,*
*you rise with the wind,*
*your eyes brighter than dust —*
*the silence of the plain belongs to you.*

## 🦎 3.11- Marmêlke (مارمێلکەی) — Common Wall Lizard / The Little Guardian of Stone (Podarcis muralis kurdistanica)

The Marmêlke is one of the most familiar and beloved little beings in Kurdish daily life — a tiny guardian of warmth that lives between stones and sunlight. From the courtyards of **Amed (Diyarbakir), Mêrdîn, Êlû (Batman), Şirnex, Colemêrg (Hakkarî), Bitlis (Bêdlês), Agrî, Çewlîk, Dersim, Meletî, Meletî, Qers, Rîndik**, and the northern valleys of **Erzerom, Erzingan**, to the gardens of **Silemani, Halabja, Soran, Rawanduz, Amedi, Duhok, Zakho, Bradost, Qandil**, and the plains of **Kirkuk, Garmiyan, Kalar, Kifri, Khanaqin, Xaneqîn, Jalawla**, all the way to the old stone houses of **Mahabad, Urmê (Urmia), Sine (Ardalan), Kirmaşan, Xorawa (Khorramabad), Eqbatan (Hamedan), Baxtiyarî, Xoristan (Khuzestan), Kewegle**, and the warm edges of **Rojava — Afrin, Cindirês, Qamişlo, Kobanê, Hesekê, Derik**, the Marmêlke is always nearby, warming itself on sunlit stones and ancient walls.

It is a creature both wild and domestic — living close to people, yet always keeping its quiet independence. At dawn it appears on steps, walls, and fence stones, lying flat against the warmth that fuels its tiny heartbeat. It feeds on flies, spiders, ants, and small insects, keeping balance in gardens and houses without anyone asking it to. Quick, cautious, and endlessly curious, it moves like a slip of shadow — vanishing under a stone one moment, reappearing on a rooftop the next.
During the burning hours of noon, it rests in cracks and crevices, returning in the cool of evening to finish its silent patrol.

Small but exquisite, the Marmêlke grows **12–18 cm**, a mosaic of earthy beauty. Its back is painted in greens, browns, bronzes, and scattered dark patterns that fit the stones perfectly. The belly is pale cream or warm yellow, glowing faintly in sunlight. In spring, males take on a gentle green shimmer, a colour that seems borrowed from young leaves.
Its long, delicate tail provides balance and speed — and if caught by a predator, it breaks off and regrows, a quiet miracle of survival known to every village child.

When spring warms the land, males court females with a dance of stillness and flickering tails. After mating, the female hides **2–5 eggs** under warm stones or soft soil. By midsummer, tiny lizards emerge — fully formed, perfect copies of their parents, already quick, already wise. Their lives often last **4–6 years**, though many fall to birds, snakes, or cats.
Yet every one of them is part of the ancient cycle that ties sun, stone, and life together.

In Kurdish culture, the Marmêlke is a symbol of blessing, patience, and quiet protection.
Elders often say:

**“Devar bi Marmêlke bê, wek axa bê xelk e.”**
*“A wall without a lizard is like a land without people.”*

A house with Marmêlke is warm, alive, and watched over. Children whisper that it brings sunlight into the home, carrying tiny messages between earth and sky.

The Marmêlke is still abundant across Kurdistan, yet modern concrete, sealed walls, and the destruction of old gardens and stone fences are reducing its sacred spaces. To protect this soul of the stones, villages must protect the stones themselves.

*You live between stones and silence,*
*a thread of sunlight on the wall —*
*small heart, ancient soul,*
*keeper of warmth and memory.*

## 🦎 3.12- Marmêlkei Awê / Qalxokê Avê (مارمێلکەی ئاوێ / قەڵخۆکێ ئاوێ) — Water Lizard / The Spring Lizard of Kurdistan (Ophisops elegans kurdistanica)

Wherever fresh water touches warm stone — along the clear streams of **Erbil**, the springs of **Soran**, the cool valleys of **Halabja**, and the mountain ponds of **Hawraman** — the Marmêlkei Awê appears like a small flash of living colour.
It is one of the most joyful and active lizards of Kurdistan, spending its days darting across rocks, leaping between stones, and basking in sunlight that glitters like silver on water.

Shepherds and children know it well.
They see it skitter from one rock to another with effortless grace, stopping suddenly to turn its head — as if greeting whoever has entered its little kingdom.
Around springs and water pools, it shines like a fragment of rainbow fallen into the grass.
It feeds on small insects and moves with a boldness unusual for such a tiny creature, always alert, always curious, always glowing with life.

Small and delicate, the Water Lizard grows only **15–20 cm**, but its colours hold the soul of Kurdish nature.
Near water it becomes emerald green; on dry hills it turns golden brown; along its sides flow thin lines of blue or turquoise; and its belly shines with cream or pale yellow.
Its long tail, which it can detach to escape danger, helps it balance while making quick leaps across stones.
Its bright eyes, flickering tongue, and restless movement make it appear like a spark of living light.

With the arrival of late spring, these lizards begin to breed.
Females lay **4–8 tiny eggs** in warm, moist soil close to springs.
After six to eight weeks, the young hatch — already agile, already full of energy, tiny

guardians of water and stone.
They live **5–7 years**, spending the hottest hours in shade before returning to their bright rocks in the afternoon.

In Kurdish lore, the Marmêlkei Awê — the Qalxokê Avê — is a beloved sign of purity and renewal.
Villagers say that when these lizards play around a spring, the water will stay pure and the year will be prosperous.
A well-known saying whispers this truth:

**“Marmêlkei Awê, dilê avê ye.”**
*“The water lizard is the heart of the spring.”*

Though still common, it faces danger from polluted water, dying springs, and the drying of mountain sources.
Protecting clean water means protecting this small ambassador of life — the bright, living thread between sun and spring.

*Child of the spring,*
*you drink the light itself —*
*your shadow*
*is the song of water.*

## 🦎 3.13- Şuşînk / Qalxokê Şûşink (شوشینک) — Zagros Lizard / The Rock Lizard of Kurdistan (Lacerta media kurdistanica)

Across the warm stone slopes of the **Zagros Mountains**, where oak forests thin into rocky terraces, the Şuşînk lives as a bright thread woven into the fabric of Kurdish nature.
It thrives from the cliffs of **Hawraman and Shaho**, through the sunlit hills of **Soran, Choman, Amedi, Barzan, Bradost**, and down the gentler valleys of **Kirmashan, Ardalan, Merîwan, Halabja**, and **Silemani**, stretching further into the dry edges of **Garmiyan, Kalar, Kifri**, and the foothills reaching toward **Mahabad, Urmia (Wirmê), Ilam, and Luristan**.
Wherever stone holds the memory of sunlight, the Şuşînk is there — fast, alert, alive.

From the first light of morning until evening cools the land, it darts across boulders in quick flashes, chasing insects, exploring crevices, or simply lying still on a warm stone with only the tip of its tail twitching.
Spring brings its greatest activity, when the world wakes after winter sleep and the lizard must warm its blood before it can move, hunt, or digest food.
Its life is bound to the sun — a creature whose heart beats in rhythm with heat and light.
It feeds on small beetles, spiders, crickets, and young herbs, keeping the mountains' delicate balance intact.
If danger approaches, it vanishes into cracks with astonishing speed, becoming stone once more.

The Şuşînk is slender and striking, its body shimmering with colours that echo the land — green like mountain moss, bronze like dried grass, grey like weathered rock.
In spring, males display vivid patches of sky-blue along their sides, glowing like small jewels under the Kurdish sun.
Its tail, long and graceful, can detach when caught — a gift of survival from ancient evolution, allowing the lizard to escape while the tail writhes like a decoy behind it.
When sunlight hits its scales, it shines with a soft metallic glow, as if woven from light.

With the warming of spring, males begin their quiet dance — bobbing heads, arching backs, and circling movements meant to attract females.
After mating, females lay **5–10 eggs** beneath flat stones or in pockets of warm soil.
Two months later, tiny hatchlings emerge into the world already alert, fast, and ready to hunt.
Adults may live **6–8 years**, spending the long winter months deep under stones, where frost cannot reach them.

In Kurdish rural culture, the Şuşînk is admired for its speed and quiet confidence.
Villagers often say that its behaviour foretells the day's weather:

**"Şuşînk diroj bibe, rojê jî dirêj e."**
*"If the lizard basks long, the day will be long."*

To many elders, it is a symbol of harmony and intuition — a creature that knows when to move, when to wait, and when to disappear into shadow.
Children greet it with curiosity, calling it **"xezaloka rojê"**, *the little gazelle of the sun*.

Though still common on Kurdish hillsides, the Şuşînk is vulnerable to habitat loss — stone quarrying, road construction, heavy grazing, and the destruction of old rock terraces.
Protecting the mountains means protecting the small sun-dancers who bring life to the stones.

*Sun's companion,*
*you move between heat and stone —*
*your stillness teaches motion,*
*your silence speaks of light.*

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## 🦎 3.14- Sermazeleî Kilik Dirkawî / Kilikê Dirkawî ( سەرمازەڵەی کلک دڕکاوی کلیکە دڕکاوی) — Kurdistan Spiny-Tailed Lizard / The Desert Sentinel of Kurdistan (Uromastyx aegyptia kurdistanica)

Across the semi-desert plains and rocky plateaus of southern and western Kurdistan — from the open lands of **Makhmur** and **Kifri** to the warm, wind-carved stretches of **Garmian** and the ancient soils of the **Nineveh plains (Neynawa)** — the Sermazeleî Kilik Dirkawî moves like a creature carved from sunlight and stone.
It thrives where the earth is dry, the air still, and the sun rules the sky.

This remarkable lizard lives close to the burrows it digs deep into the hard ground, sometimes reaching **2–3 meters** underground — cool chambers that protect it from the burning Kurdish summers.

During the hottest hours of the day, it rises slowly, climbs onto a rock, and basks for long stretches, collecting the warmth it needs to live.
It is one of Kurdistan’s few mostly herbivorous reptiles, feeding on hardy desert plants, seeds, flowers, and occasionally insects.
When danger approaches, it retreats into its burrow and blocks the entrance with its powerful spiny tail — a shield and a warning.

Large and ancient in appearance, the Sermazeleî Kilik Dirkawî can reach **70 cm** in length.
Its body is heavy, its tail thick and ringed with sharp scales that deliver painful strikes when whipped.
Its colours mirror the land itself — sandy yellows, olive greys, and deep browns — blending perfectly with desert rock and dust.
In spring, males glow in **bright yellow or fiery orange**, standing out like small suns scattered across the earth.
Its flat head and dark, watchful eyes give it a wise, timeless look, as though it remembers stories older than the villages around it.

When April and May arrive, life begins again beneath the soil.
Females lay **10–20 eggs** in warm burrows, and after almost ten weeks, strong young lizards emerge — small, tough, and ready to dig their own hiding places.
Surprisingly long-lived, these desert guardians can survive for **up to 25 years**, their lives slow and steady like the journeys of the mountains.

In Kurdish tradition, the Sermazeleî Kilik Dirkawî is treated with quiet respect — a symbol of endurance, patience, and the wisdom of the sun.
Shepherds say that if you see one standing proudly on a rock in spring, the coming summer will be long and good.
Old proverbs whisper:

**“Sermazeleî Kilik Dirkawî dirojê nas dike.”**
*“The black-tail knows the secrets of the sun.”*

Though still present in many arid regions, this lizard faces threats from habitat loss and old hunting traditions.
Its fat and skin were once used in folk medicine, though such practices have mostly disappeared.
Today, it is recognised as an important indicator of the health of Kurdistan’s fragile desert ecosystems.

*Child of fire and dust,*
*you hold the sun in your eyes —*
*each breath a whisper*
*from the heart of the desert.*

## 🦎 3.15- Qalxokê Şevê / Sermazelei Şevê / Qalxokê Xane / Marmêlkê Şevê / Qalxokê Gundê (قەڵخۆکێ شەوێ / سەرمازەڵەی شەوێ / مارمێلکەی شەوێ)

## — Kurdistan House Gecko / The Night Lizard of Kurdistan (Hemidactylus kurdicus)

When night settles gently over the stone houses of **Hewlêr (Erbil)**, **Silemani**, **Hawraman**, **Kirmashan**, **Ardalan**, **Halabja**, **Amedi**, **Akre**, **Duhok**, and the warm courtyards of **Rojava — Afrin, Qamişlo, Kobanê, Hesekê** — a small, soft-footed visitor begins its quiet journey.
This is the **Qalxokê Şevê**, the Night Gecko of Kurdistan — a creature so familiar, so gentle, that it feels like part of the home itself.

It awakens as the last glow of sunset fades from the Zagros walls.
Moving silently across old mud-brick houses, ancient ruins, orchard walls, and even the ceilings of village rooms, it follows the soft hum of night insects drawn to lamplight.
Its tiny feet carry thousands of microscopic hairs that allow it to climb stone, wood, glass — even upside down — as if the air itself were holding it gently.
By day it disappears into cracks, behind stones, under roofs and tiles, sleeping until the world cools again.

The Qalxokê Şevê is small and delicate, rarely more than **10–14 cm** long.
Its skin is a soft grey-pink, speckled with faint brown — colours that disappear perfectly against Kurdish walls and cliffs.
Under the dim yellow of night lamps, its large, lidless eyes glow like tiny moons, reflecting the quiet patience of night.
When threatened, it can drop its slender tail, which wriggles like a distraction while the gecko slips away — a sacrifice that grows back slowly, like a small miracle hidden beneath stone.

In the warm months, females lay **two small white eggs** tucked safely in deep crevices.
After forty to fifty days, tiny geckos emerge — perfect, miniature versions of their parents, already capable of hunting.

They whisper faint clicking sounds into the night, a secret language shared among walls and shadows.
In the wild, they may live **4–6 years**, longer where homes protect them.

To Kurdish families, the Qalxokê Şevê is not a pest, but a blessing.
For generations, elders taught children:

**“Qalxokê şevê, hevalê ronîye.”**
*“The night lizard is a friend of the light.”*

It is believed that when a gecko appears near a house, peace is near and the home is clean of ill fortune.
In some villages, people whisper that geckos carry the quiet spirits of ancestors, watching gently from the corners of the night.

Though still common across Kurdistan, spreading from the warm plains of **Garmiyan and Kifri** to the ruins of **Mêrdîn, Amed, Botan**, and even the coastal edges near **Antiyoc (Hatay)**, its survival is threatened by concrete expansion and pesticides that poison the night.
To protect the gecko is to protect the spirit of Kurdish nights — the old walls, the soft light, the quiet breath of summer evenings.

*Soft-footed watcher,*
*you walk the walls of memory —*
*in your silence lives*
*the gentleness of night.*

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## 🦎 3.16- Marmêlkêi Şevê / Qalxokê Dîwarê / Qalxokê Gundê

**(مارمێلکەی شەوێ / قەڵخۆکی دیوار) — Kurdistan Wall Gecko / The House Gecko of the Highlands (Hemidactylus turcicus)**

When the sun sinks behind the mountains and lamps glow in Kurdish homes from **Erbil, Sulaimani, Amedi, Hawraman, Ranya, Duhok, Kermashan, and the warm plains of Garmian**, the Marmêlkêi Şevê awakens.

It is one of the gentlest and most familiar beings in our villages — a soft-footed guardian that comes out only when night begins to breathe.

Moving like a whisper across clay walls, stone houses, and wooden beams, it glides quietly in search of insects that gather around light.
Flickering moths, tiny flies, mosquitoes, and night-moving spiders — all become its silent feast.
During the day, it disappears into cracks behind ovens, between old stones, or beneath roofs, resting until darkness returns.
Though small, every movement is elegant — a shadow passing over lamplight, a secret dancer of the night.

Its delicate body, **8–12 cm** long, carries the soft colours of silence — grey, pale pink, sometimes translucent like morning ash.
Large eyes with vertical pupils glow under lamps, giving it an expression of calm intelligence.
With feet covered in thousands of microscopic pads, it climbs smooth walls with no effort, even walking upside down on ceilings as if gravity itself bows to it.
If danger approaches, it may release its tail — a small miracle of survival — leaving behind a wriggling distraction before slipping into safety, later growing a new tail in its place.

The Marmêlkêi Şevê lives on air and subtle moisture, rarely needing to drink.
Sometimes, on warm summer nights, a quiet sound travels through the house —
a soft **“tik... tik... tik...”**
Villagers say it is calling to its mate, singing to the darkness in a voice smaller than breath.

In Kurdish culture, this tiny gecko is not feared — it is cherished.
Families believe it brings protection, absorbing bad luck that enters with the insects of the night.
Elders warn children gently:

**“Marmêlkêi Şevê meke qet bikujî — ew rêzgariyê da axê!”**

*“Never harm the night gecko — it carries the blessing of the house!”*

Seen on a wall near lamplight, it is said to watch quietly over sleeping families, keeping away the unseen and the unwanted.
A soft spirit of patience, harmony, and coexistence.

Common across the towns and villages of all Kurdistan — from Amed to Erbil, from Zakho to Sanandaj — it survives even in the busiest streets and newest houses, adapting like a small piece of ancient nature living inside modern life.

*Silent dancer of the clay wall,*
*your steps whisper like wind over stone —*
*small soul of gentleness,*
*you guard the dreams of the night.*

## 🦎 3.17- Mendîn / Mendînê Kurdistanê (مەندین / مەندینێ کوردستانێ) — Kurdish Chameleon / The Silent Watcher of Kurdistan (Chamaeleo chamaeleon kurdistanicus)

Among the bushy scrublands, fig orchards, and quiet river valleys of southern and western Kurdistan — in the warm landscapes of **Duhok, Amedi, Zakho, and the Zagros foothills** — lives one of the most enchanting creatures of Kurdish nature: the Mendîn.
It moves slowly along branches, swaying from side to side like leaves dancing in the wind, blending so perfectly with its surroundings that it seems to be part of the tree itself.

Unlike any other reptile in Kurdistan, the Mendîn carries the art of colour within its skin.
When it is calm and warmed by the sun, it glows a gentle green; when it is excited or cold, its colours shift to yellow, brown, even deep black.
This change is not merely camouflage — it is emotion, language, temperature, and survival written directly onto its skin.
With a tongue that strikes out faster than an eye can blink, sometimes twice the length of its own body, it catches flies, grasshoppers, and butterflies with perfect precision.

Elegant and small, usually **25–30 cm** long, the Mendîn has a tail that curls like a question mark and grips branches with quiet strength.
Its eyes, strange and beautiful, move independently — one watching the earth, the other scanning the sky — a master of awareness, seeing the world in two directions at once.
Its skin, textured like bark and leaf, makes it look like a living piece of the forest, crafted from stone and greenery.

When the warmth of late spring arrives, the female digs a tiny chamber in soft soil and lays **20–40 eggs** within.
These rest through the seasons until, after **6–9 months**, tiny green hatchlings emerge,

already skilled in colour and stealth, each one a miniature artist of survival.
Most Mendîn live **3–5 years**, longer in cooler, gentler climates.

In Kurdish folklore, the Mendîn is both mystical and humorous.
Children whisper that it can "hear the wind and taste the sun."
It is a symbol of patience, adaptability, and deep observation — the quiet watcher who speaks through stillness.
A proverb says:

**"Mendîn dizane bê gotin çi bibêje."**
*"The chameleon knows what to say, even in silence."*

Though still found in many orchards and valley groves, the Mendîn faces threats from habitat loss and people capturing it out of curiosity.
Protecting fig orchards, olive groves, and natural scrublands means preserving this delicate, intelligent wonder of Kurdistan — a creature that teaches us to change with the world without ever losing our soul.

*Leaf that dreams,*
*eye that never blinks —*
*you change your colours,*
*but never your soul.*

## 🦎 3.18- Zendei Hewramanê / Zenda Avê / Zende Kûrdistanê ( زەندەی هەورامان / زەندەی ئاوی)— Hawraman Salamander / The Salamander of Kurdistan (Neurergus derjugini)

In the hidden valleys of **Hawraman, Shaho, and Avroman**, where the water runs cold and pure even in midsummer, the Zendei Hewramanê lives like a secret flame.
It clings to the mossy stones of mountain streams at **1,000–1,800 meters**, where the air is thin and the waterfalls whisper ancient names.
During the daylight hours it vanishes under rocks or into tiny cracks, waiting for night to rise.
When darkness falls, it emerges — slow, silent, and glowing like a living ember — to feed on insects, tiny worms, and the shy creatures that drift along the water's edge.
The colder the stream, the more it thrives; the cleaner the water, the stronger it becomes.
Where the Zendei Hewramanê survives, the land is still pure.

A jewel shaped by fire and water, its black skin is painted with bright orange and yellow streaks that run along the back like flames slipping through night.
Adults reach **12–15 cm**, slender-bodied with long, powerful tails that cut through the water in smooth motions.
Its golden eyes shine even in moonlight — as if carrying the last spark of an ancient hearth hidden beneath the mountain stone.
Each salamander holds its own pattern, a living signature of the valley where it was born.

When the snows melt and spring awakens the highlands, the Zendei Hewramanê begins its quiet ritual of renewal.
Females place **30–50 eggs** beneath stones in fast-moving streams; three to four weeks later, tiny larvae emerge, breathing through delicate gills like underwater butterflies.
Only after growing strong do they leave the water, lunged and transformed, climbing into the world of rock and shadow.

Some live more than **12 years**, guardians of streams older than memory.
Because they can survive only in the purest waters, they are the mountain's own truth-tellers — if the salamander disappears, the valley is wounded.

In Kurdish folklore, this salamander is known as the **Fire Guardian**.
People believe it was born where a holy spring once met a lightning strike, making a creature touched by both flame and water.
Children of Hawraman whisper wishes when they find one, for it is said to deliver prayers back to the heart of the mountains.
And elders say:

**"Zendei Hewramanê, avê jîyanê ye."**
*"The Salamander of Hawraman is the water of life."*

Rare, shy, and almost mythical, the Zendei Hewramanê is now critically endangered — surviving only in a few remote streams threatened by drought, pollution, and the footsteps of careless tourism.
To protect the salamander is to protect the soul of Hawraman itself — its sacred springs, its ancient silence, and its living memory.

*Born of fire and water,*
*you walk between worlds —*
*your skin remembers*
*the first dawn of the mountains.*

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## 🦎 3.19- Ejdihai Zagros / Ejdihayê Zagrosê( ئەژدیهای زاگرۆس)

## — Zagros Monitor Lizard / The Desert Dragon of Kurdistan (Varanus griseus zagrosensis)

In the sun-burned plains and dry valleys of **Ilam, Dehloran, Xaneqîn (Khanaqin), Mandalî, Kifri, Kalar, Garmiyan**, and the desert-edge foothills stretching toward **Halabja, Khuzestan (Xoristan), Badra, Mehran**, and the warm southern skirts of the **Zagros Mountains**, there walks a creature whose presence feels ancient — the **Ejdihai Zagros**, the Dragon of Kurdistan.

It belongs to the open lands where stones crack under heat, where winds carry dust like old memories, and where silence stretches wide.

The Ejdihai Zagros loves stony plains, thorny scrublands, and semi-desert slopes where it can bask on rocks heated by the morning sun.
When dawn rises, it crawls from its burrow with slow, powerful steps, lifting its head to taste the air with its long forked tongue — reading the world like a poet reading the wind.
It wanders in steady, measured strides, tail sweeping behind it like a whip of balance and authority.
A master hunter and scavenger, it feeds on rodents, lizards, insects, birds' eggs, and even carrion — cleaning the land and keeping life in balance.
Despite its size and strength, it is cautious, alert, and deeply aware of every vibration in the earth.

The Zagros Monitor is one of the largest reptiles of Kurdistan, reaching up to **1.2 meters** from nose to tail.
Its body is sculpted from earth itself — scales rough and patterned in greys, olives, and sandy yellows, blending seamlessly with sun-bleached stones.
Its head is long and angular, with sharp sight; its limbs thick and muscular, built for digging, climbing, and defending.
The tail, half its entire length, can deliver a powerful strike when threatened — a reminder that even the desert has guardians.

With the warmth of early summer, males and females meet briefly in the quiet shadows of stones.
The female digs a deep sandy burrow and lays **10–20 eggs**, hiding them beneath earth and heat.
Two months later, small dragons emerge — fully independent from the first breath, quick, sharp, and ready to hunt.
They grow fast in their first years, then settle into a slow, long life of **12–15 years**, spending winter months in deep hibernation beneath warm soil.

In Kurdish folklore, the Ejdihai Zagros is both feared and honoured.
Shepherds once called it **“eçdiha”**, the small dragon of the desert, believing it protected hidden water springs from intruders.
Villagers said that where this lizard lives, the land is clean — for it avoids polluted waters and disturbed soil.
A saying survives in the mountains:

**“Ejdihai çiyayê, navê xwe nas dike.”**
*“The mountain lizard knows the name of its own stone.”*

A quiet lesson about belonging, memory, and the deep bond between creature and homeland.

Today, the Zagros Monitor survives only in scattered pockets across the southern Kurdish plains — especially around **Ilam, Dehloran, Xaneqîn**, and parts of **Khuzestan’s Zagros edge**.
Habitat destruction, illegal hunting, and shrinking wilderness threaten this ancient wanderer.
To protect it is to honour the desert’s wisdom and preserve one of the oldest lives still walking our land.

*Ancient wanderer,*
*you walk between fire and dust —*
*each footprint a whisper*
*from the time before names.*

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## 🐢 3.20- Kûsî Zeminê / Kaplûkê Zagros / Kisel / Kûsî Çiyayî

**(کوسی زەوینێ / کەپڵکێ زاگرۆس / کیسەڵ / کوسی چیایی)**

**— Kurdistan Land Tortoise / The Mountain Tortoise of Kurdistan**

**(Testudo graeca kurdistanica)**

Among the rocky slopes, oak forests, and wildflower valleys of the Zagros Mountains — from **Hawraman, Shaho, Halabja, Paveh, Merîwan, Soran, Choman, Amedi, Barzan, Bradost, Silemani, Erbil (Hewlêr), Kifri, Garmiyan**, and the gentle low hills stretching toward **Mahabad, Urmia (Urmê/Wirmê), Kirmashan, Ardalan, Ilam, Luristan**, and even pockets of the Kurdish plains near **Mêrdîn, Amed, Botan**, and **Afrin** — there lives a creature as old as silence itself: the **Kisel**, also called **Kaplûkê Zagros** or **Kisal**.

It moves slowly through the seasons, following a rhythm older than villages, older than folklore, older than memory.
In spring, when the mountains bloom, it grazes on fresh grasses, chamomile, clover, and mountain herbs.
In the hot breath of summer, it retreats beneath stones and bushes, seeking shade among oak roots and cool earth.
When winter cold sweeps across the Zagros, the Kisel burrows deep into the soil, disappearing into a long, quiet sleep until the world awakens again.

Its domed shell shines in earthy tones of **golden brown, olive, and dark bronze**, patterned like carved mountains — each ring a year of endurance.
Adults grow up to **20–30 cm**, their shells like ancient shields shaped by sun and wind.
Its legs are thick and strong, perfect for climbing rocky ground, and its eyes reflect a gentle wisdom — the patience of centuries.

A strict herbivore, the Kisel feeds on wildflowers, thorny leaves, grasses, fallen fruits, and morning dew.
It rarely drinks directly; instead, it gathers its moisture from plants and the breath of dawn.
Though slow, it remembers paths with surprising clarity, returning to the same meadows and stones every year — a pilgrim of patience.

With the first warmth of April, males approach females with soft grunts and gentle nudges.
Females lay **3–8 eggs** in warm soil, covering them carefully and leaving them to the sun's natural care.
Weeks later, tiny tortoises no bigger than walnuts emerge from the earth — perfect miniature guardians of the land.

In Kurdish folklore, the Kisel is a symbol of wisdom, endurance, and peace.
Elders often say:

**“Kisel diçe hêdî, lê hergiz naxebite.”**
*“The tortoise walks slowly, but it never falls.”*

Children greet it with respect, calling it the **keeper of the earth’s blessing**.
Some villagers believe it protects a home from misfortune and brings balance wherever it walks.

Still common across much of the Zagros, the Kisel is declining in some regions due to grassland loss, wildfires, roads, and illegal collection.
As one of Kurdistan’s oldest species, it carries the **living memory of the mountains**, a reminder that life’s truest strength is quiet and enduring.

*Ancient pilgrim of the hills,*
*your shell is the map of time —*
*each step a whisper*
*from the heart of the earth.*

## 🐢 3.21- Kûsî Avê / Kîselî Awê / Kaplûkê Avê ( کوسی ئاوی / کیسەڵی ئاوی کەپلۆکی ئاوی) — Caspian Turtle / The Water Guardian of Kurdistan (Mauremys caspica kurdistanica)

Where the rivers slow their breath and the reeds grow tall — in the lakes of **Zakho**, the canals of **Ranya**, the waters of **Chamchamal**, the plains of **Kirkuk** and **Garmian** — the Kûsî Avê rises from the water like a small, ancient memory.
It is one of the most recognisable reptiles in Kurdistan, seen basking on sun-warmed stones or drifting peacefully through shallow streams, its movements unhurried and full of quiet wisdom.

On land, it steps slowly and thoughtfully, but once beneath the surface it becomes a graceful swimmer, gliding through clear water with the ease of a creature perfectly shaped by rivers.
If startled, it slips beneath the water in an instant, vanishing into green silence.
It feeds on water plants, insects, small fish, and frogs — a silent caretaker of balance in Kurdistan's wetland ecosystems.

The Caspian Turtle is medium in size, **20–25 cm** long, with an olive-brown shell brushed with pale yellow streaks that catch the sunlight.
Its head and limbs are adorned with fine yellow and green stripes, and its eyes shimmer golden-green like reflections of reeds on water.
Females grow broader and heavier, males slimmer with longer tails.
On warm afternoons, they stretch their necks toward the sun — a familiar sight to anyone who has rested beside a Kurdish riverbank and watched life unfold.

In spring and early summer, the Kûsî Avê begins its ancient cycle.
Females leave the water and bury **3–10 eggs** in sandy soil near the bank.
Two months later, tiny hatchlings break free and instinctively crawl toward the shimmering line of water, beginning a life that may last **30–40 years or more**.
Slow to grow, patient in movement, steady in spirit — they embody the rhythm of rivers that have shaped Kurdistan for thousands of years.

In Kurdish folklore, turtles are symbols of endurance, peace, and the memory of homeland.
Elders say:

**“Kûsî avê nasê rûbarî xwe ye.”**
*“The water turtle never forgets its river.”*

Farmers believe that meeting one on a spring path brings a year of rain and calm winds, for the turtle walks only where the earth is content.

Today the Caspian Turtle faces threats — polluted rivers, shrinking wetlands, and the habit of capturing them as pets.
Yet in many Kurdish villages, they are left untouched, respected as silent keepers of ancient patience and guardians of still water.

*Slow heart of the water,*
*your shell remembers every dawn —*
*each ripple*
*a story of time.*

## 🐢 3.22- Reqqe / Neqqe (ڕەققە / نەققە) — Euphrates Softshell Turtle / The Water Spirit of Kurdistan (Rafetus euphraticus)

In the slow, deep waters that weave through the Kurdish homeland — the **Sirwan**, the **Little Zab**, the **Euphrates tributaries**, and the warm marshy edges of **Kalar, Kifri, Garmiyan, Khanaqin (Xaneqîn), Jalawla, Darbandikhan**, and the river valleys stretching toward **Rojava's Euphrates belt, Hesekê, Raqqa, Kobanê, and Deir ez-Zor** — the Reqqe glides like a shadow from another world.
It is a creature older than mountains, older than kingdoms, older even than many of the rivers it calls home. For more than **30 million years**, the ancestors of this turtle swam across Mesopotamia, long before the first villages of Zagros were built.

The Reqqe prefers slow, sandy-bottomed waters where silence gathers — places where it can bury itself beneath mud with only its long, delicate snout rising to breathe. It feeds on small fish, frogs, insects, and soft plants, quietly cleaning the river as it moves. At dawn and dusk it roams the shallows; by day it hides beneath roots and reeds, or basks on muddy banks warmed by the sun of **Kirmashan, Silemani, Hawraman**, and the lower valleys leading toward **Xoristan (Khuzestan)**.
When winter tightens its grip over the Zagros foothills, the Reqqe descends deep into the riverbed, hibernating in warm silt until spring returns.

The Reqqe is unlike any turtle in Kurdistan. Its shell is not hard but soft — flat, leathery, and flexible — designed for gliding through sand and water with ease.
Adults can grow **over 70 cm** in shell length and weigh **more than 25 kilograms**, their skin painted in earthy tones of olive, brown, and mottled black.
Its long neck and snorkel-like nose give it the look of an ancient river spirit.
When it swims, it does not splash — it moves like silk under the water, a breath of memory drifting through the current.

Breeding begins in late spring when the riverbanks warm. Females crawl quietly onto sandy shores to lay **15–30 eggs**, covering them with mud and grass.

After **60–70 days**, tiny turtles emerge and race toward the water, fragile as dew, threatened by birds, foxes, and the harshness of the land.
Those who survive grow slowly, taking a decade to mature, and may live **up to 60 years**, becoming guardians of the river's history.

In Kurdish folklore, the Reqqe is a symbol of patience and long life.
River villagers say the turtle "remembers the water," and that where Reqqe lives, the river stays peaceful.
Children grow up hearing the old saying:

**"Reqqe diavêt, lê demê wê dirêj e."**
*"The turtle moves slowly, but its time is long."*

It is the river's elder — quiet, enduring, and always returning.

But today the Reqqe faces danger. Dams choke the rivers of **Sirwan and Little Zab**, pollution clouds the marshes, and the ancient nesting banks disappear under construction.
Once widespread, the Reqqe now survives only in a few protected pockets — especially around **Darbandikhan**, the lower **Sirwan basin**, and remote bends of the **Euphrates in Rojava**.
Protecting this turtle means preserving the oldest memory of Kurdistan's rivers — a lineage older than the stories carved in stone.

*Ancient swimmer,*
*your breath rises like memory.*
*The river remembers you*
*even when men forget its song.*

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## 🐸 3.23- Boqe Keske / Boqa Keske / Boqikê Darê /Boqe Baharê

**(بۆقە کەسکە / بوقی دارێ / بۆقی بەهار) — Kurdistan Tree Frog / The Singer of the Springs (Hyla savignyi kurdistanica)**

When spring rains fall upon the valleys and terraced hills of **Shaho, Hawraman, Soran, Kirmashan, Ardalan, Sne (Sanandaj), Merîwan, Paveh**, and the warm river-fed lowlands stretching toward **Xaneqîn, Khanaqin, Kifri, Garmiyan, Mandalî**, and the orchards of **Rojava's Hesekê, Qamişlo, Kobanê, and Afrin**, the voice of the Boqe Keske returns — a shimmering chorus rising from reeds, ponds, irrigation canals, and mountain pools.

It is one of the few amphibians in Kurdistan capable of climbing **trees, tall reeds, grape vines, and even rocky walls**, moving with delicate steps under the glow of dusk.

At night it emerges to hunt small insects, glowing almost like a leaf come alive; by day it hides beneath fig leaves, grape clusters, wet stones, or the cool shadows of pomegranate orchards.
Farmers still say: **“When the frog sings, the wheat will grow.”**

The Boqe Keske is small but luminous, its smooth skin painted in shades of **leaf-green, olive, or pale spring yellow**, with golden eyes that catch the last light of sunset.
Adults rarely exceed **4–5 cm**, yet their grace, colour, and song make them stand out far beyond their size.
Its long limbs and soft toe pads allow it to cling to reeds, branches, and even glass — a tiny climber blessed by the rain.
When the males sing, the silver bubble of their throat expands like a drop of moonlight, releasing a soft musical trill that spreads over the fields and valleys.

When the first rains fall, the frogs gather at shallow waters — spring pools, rice paddies, irrigation canals, and mountain streams.
Females lay hundreds of tiny eggs attached to water plants, and within days the water fills with tadpoles.
By early summer, the tadpoles transform into young frogs and begin the delicate dance between water and land.
Their yearly cycle mirrors the Kurdish year — **from snow, to rain, to the bloom of green hills**.

In Kurdish folklore, the Boqe Keske is a symbol of **renewal, fertility, and the joy of rain**.
Children imitate its croak to call for spring showers, and elders believe its voice at dusk blesses the fields.
An old saying remains alive in many villages:

**“Boqe Keske digot, ax jî didemê.”**
*“When the frog sings, the earth drinks.”*

Because it thrives only in fresh, clean water, villagers see it as a sign that the land is healthy and alive.

Though still common across **Eastern, Southern, and Western Kurdistan**, especially where rivers and orchards remain untouched, the Boqe Keske faces threats — pollution, drought, shrinking streams, and the disappearance of wetlands.
Its survival depends on protecting the waters that feed not just the frog, but the fields, orchards, and hearts of Kurdistan.

*Little voice of rain,*
*your song wakes the sleeping earth —*
*each note a drop of life,*
*each breath a new beginning.*

## 🐸 3.24- Boq / Boqê Avê / Boqê Çemê (بۆق / بۆقی ئاوێ / بۆقی ڕووبار) — Green Frog / The River Singer of Kurdistan (Pelophylax ridibundus kurdistanicus)

Along the rivers, rice fields, ponds, and irrigation canals of **Duhok, Erbil, Ranya, and Halabja**, the Boq begins its nightly song — a deep, rhythmic *“boq... boq...”* that rises with the dusk.
To Kurdish ears, this sound is not noise; it is the music of water itself, a sign that the land is alive and the rains are near.
Where the Boq sings, farmers say the earth is healthy, and the river remembers its purpose.

The Boq lives close to water, swimming with powerful legs and leaping across damp grass with astonishing strength.
It spends its nights hunting flies, mosquitoes, and tiny insects, quietly keeping the valleys clean and balanced.
When disturbed, it slips into the water in a single graceful motion, disappearing beneath floating reeds.
During spring, it wanders into rice fields and gardens, resting among wet leaves after warm rains.

Large and bright green, the Boq measures **7–12 cm**, its back patterned in olive and dark brown spots.
Its belly is pale and smooth, a soft mirror of the moonlit water it calls home.
When the males call, their two side vocal sacs inflate like silver balloons — a cheerful chorus that echoes across villages.
Sometimes, at night, the reflection of their golden eyes flickers across a pond like tiny lanterns floating on the surface.

With the first warmth of spring, male Boqs gather in shallow water and lift their voices, calling for mates.

A single female may lay **up to 10,000 eggs**, suspended among reeds like living pearls. Within days, tadpoles emerge, black and shining, feeding on algae until the magic of transformation turns them into small frogs by midsummer.
The Boq can live up to **10 years**, sleeping through winter in mud at the bottom of ponds — waiting for rain to return.

In Kurdish folklore, the Boq is the voice of renewal, the bringer of fertility and joy. Children imitate its call when they play, and elders say:

**“Boq di beje, baran di xe.”**
*“When the frog sings, the rain follows.”*

To harm a Boq was once believed to bring misfortune to fields, for it was seen as a guardian of water and crops.
Its song is part of the land itself — a truth carried from ancient valleys to modern villages.

Although still common, Boqs suffer from polluted water, shrinking wetlands, and changes to rivers.
Where the Boq thrives, the land is healthy; where it grows silent, the water is in danger.

*Child of the rain,*
*your voice awakens the valley —*
*the river listens,*
*and spring begins again.*

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## 🐸 3.25- Boqa Şevê / Boqê Şevê / Boqê Axê (بۆقی شەوێ / بۆقەی زەوینێ)

## — Large Brown Toad / The Earth Walker of the Night (Bufotes viridis kurdistanica)

When the heat of the day fades and the first cool breath of evening settles across the valleys of **Duhok, Erbil, Garmian, Ranya, Halabja, and the wider Zagros foothills**, the

Boqa Şevê awakens.
It is one of the oldest companions of Kurdish village life — a creature that walks softly through the dark, guided by instinct, soil, and moonlight.
Unlike its river-born cousin, the Boq, the Boqa Şevê prefers the dry earth.
It spends its days hidden beneath stones, pressed into the cool shade of clay walls, or resting inside the rich garden soil.
When night arrives, it emerges slowly, wandering through courtyards, fields, and pathways with clumsy steps that hide a hunter's precision.
Where lamps shine, where rainwater gathers, where night insects dance — there the Boqa Şevê quietly feeds, keeping balance long before humans understood the word "ecosystem."

Stout and steady, its rough skin holds the colours of the land — brown like earth, grey like old stone, or olive like dry grass after summer winds.
Its body is thick and rounded, **8–12 cm** long, covered in small raised bumps that protect it from the harshness of the dry world.
The golden-orange eyes glow softly under torchlight, like tiny embers left from a shepherd's forgotten fire.
Unlike frogs, it does not leap — it walks.
Each step slow, deliberate, and grounded, as though listening to the soil beneath it.

When the spring rains fill the ditches, the Boqa Şevê gathers in temporary ponds that appear like miracles overnight.
Males call with deep, earthy croaks, their throats swelling like clay lanterns in the dark.
Females lay long strings of jelly-like pearls that drift gently on the water's skin.
Days later, tiny tadpoles hatch and begin their cycle of metamorphosis — from water to land, from swimmer to walker.
By early summer, small toads leave the fading pools and scatter across the fields, beginning lives that may last **up to ten years**, with long periods of hibernation during dry months.

In Kurdish villages, the Boqa Şevê is loved more than feared.
It is called **Boqê Şev — "the night frog"**, a creature believed to carry the promise of

rain.
Elders listen to its call after long dry weeks, saying with hope:

**“Boqa Şevê di beje, baran di xe.”**
*“When the night toad sings, the rain will come.”*

Farmers respect it as a protector of crops, for it devours the insects that damage fields. Children are taught never to harm it; some call it **Parêzvanê axê — “the guardian of the ground.”**
To see one walk calmly across a courtyard at night is to feel the old bond between people and the soil they live on.

Though still common, the Boqa Şevê suffers from pesticides, vanishing ponds, and expanding towns.
But where villages keep their gardens alive, where rain still gathers in spring hollows, and where people show kindness to small nighttime wanderers, the Boqa Şevê continues its quiet watch.

*Walker of the earth,*
*you rise with the moon —*
*your slow song carries*
*the heartbeat of the soil.*

## 🐊 3.26- Extinct or Lost Reptiles of Kurdistan

*(ژینەوەرە لەناوچوونەکانی کوردستان — پەیوەندییەکی ساکار لە نێوان دایک و خەیاڵ)*

**Echoes of the Ancient Rivers and Sun-burned Stones**

In the forgotten waters and scorched valleys of ancient Kurdistan, some creatures have long fallen silent — yet their shadows still linger in the stones and stories of the land. Among them were the **Mesopotamian Crocodile**, once gliding through the reed forests and marshes of the southern plains, and the **Zagros Giant Tortoise**, the slow-moving keeper of the desert's memory. These lost reptiles were the last living witnesses to a time when rivers like the Tigris and the Great Zab flowed free and untamed, nourishing worlds now buried beneath dust and dams. Their disappearance speaks not only of extinction but of **disconnection** — the fading bond between human life and the ancient pulse of nature. Though their bodies are gone, their essence endures in the myths, in the fossils beneath our feet, and in the whispers of the earth that still remembers their passage. Each vanished scale and shell reminds us that the silence of the lost is not emptiness — it is a warning written in the bones of time.

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## 🐊 3.27- Ejdihaya Avê / Ecdihay Avê (ئەژدیهای ئاوی) — The Mesopotamian Crocodile / The Forgotten Guardian of the Southern Marshes (Crocodylus suchus mesopotamicus)

The Mesopotamian Crocodile — known in old Kurdish speech as **Ejdihaya Avê**, the Water Dragon — was once the silent ruler of the rivers where ancient Kurdistan brushed the edge of Mesopotamia. It lived in the warm, reed-choked waters of the lower **Tigris** and **Great Zab**, appearing around **Xerapê (Basra)**, the riverlands of **Xaneqîn (Khanaqin)**, and the vast swaying marshes of **Hawizeh**, where the southern Kurdish

plains opened into the deep wetlands of the old world.
Here, beneath the sun of forgotten centuries, the crocodile lived like a spirit of the river itself.

Reaching **three to four metres** in length, it was an apex predator — patient, silent, and perfectly adapted to the warm mud and slow waters. Its dark green scales shone like wet armour, and when it slipped beneath the surface, it moved with the softness of drifting reeds. Fishermen once told stories of seeing only two eyes, glowing above the water at dusk, watching everything yet disturbing nothing until the moment of sudden, decisive strike. It fed on fish, birds, turtles, and small mammals, shaping the delicate balance of life along the riverbanks.

This crocodile preferred shallow rivers, reed forests, and marsh edges where heat, mud, and silence met. It was a true creature of Mesopotamia — a being of water and sun. Travelers along the Tigris would sometimes glimpse its long shadow gliding under their boats, and for centuries it was considered a sign that the river was alive and strong.
But as canals cut through the plains, as dams were built and wetlands drained, the crocodile's world shrank. By the late 1800s it had almost vanished.
By the early 20th century, it was declared **extinct** — the first great reptile lost from the extended ecological heart of Kurdistan.

In Kurdish folklore, Ejdihaya Avê appears as both protector and warning — a symbol of hidden power beneath calm waters. Elders would say,
**"Tu ne zanî çi li hundirê qetikan ve dijîn."**
*"You never know what lives beneath the reeds."*
And river children were warned with old sayings:
**"Do not anger the sleeping lion of the marsh."**
These were not stories of fear, but of respect — reminders that the river had guardians, and every creature had its place.

Though gone, its spirit remains in the stories, carvings, and memories of the land. Ancient sculptures from **Neynawa (Nineveh)** and the temples of **Uruk** show crocodiles

beside river gods, proving that this reptile once shared the spiritual life of the land where Kurdish, Sumerian, and Median cultures met.
The reeds of the Tigris still whisper of its presence; the marshes still hold its silence.

*The river no longer roars at night,*
*for its guardian has gone to sleep beneath the reeds forever.*

The disappearance of this ancient reptile reminds us that Kurdistan's wild heart once reached farther — from snowy mountains to whispering marshes, from the croak of frogs to the drifting shadows of crocodiles.
When a species vanishes, it leaves behind not emptiness, but a warning written in silence:
life, once broken, cannot be easily restored.

*The river has forgotten your breath,*
*the sun no longer warms your shell —*
*yet in the memory of stones,*
*your footprints remain.*

## 🐢 3.28- Kîselî Mezinî Zagros / Kîselî Mezin / Kûsî Mezin

## (کیسەڵی مەزنی زاگرۆس / کیسەڵی مەزن) — The Zagros Giant Tortoise / The Silent Wanderer of the Forgotten Sun (Testudo zarudnyi)

**The Lost Elder of the Kurdish Highlands**

The Zagros Giant Tortoise — known in Kurdish memory as **Pîrê Zeminê**, the Elder of the Earth — was once a quiet guardian of the southeastern Kurdish highlands. It lived across the sun-baked landscapes of **Îlam**, the rolling hills of **Lorestan (Xoristan)**, the rocky plains around **Dezful**, and the foothills of **Shaho**, wandering slowly between oak groves, dry savannas, and stony valleys where the wind carried the scent of wild herbs.

This ancient tortoise was the largest ever to walk the soil of Kurdistan. Its heavy bronze-coloured shell reached **40–45 cm**, weighing nearly **12 kilograms**, shaped like a small fortress that had grown from the earth itself. It moved with patient dignity — slow, deliberate, and eternal — a living reminder that time in the mountains flowed differently. Many lived more than **a century**, outlasting generations of shepherds, travellers, and storms. Villagers believed that each tortoise carried a piece of the land's memory on its back.

Pîrê Zeminê thrived in dry grasslands, rocky plains, and open oak woodlands, feeding on wild herbs, spring flowers, and the sweet fruits of mountain cactus. In the heat of summer it retreated into deep burrows, waiting for the world to cool. But with the first rains of spring, it emerged like a quiet blessing. Its tracks pressed into the damp soil remained for days, and people called them **"rîyên sabirê"** — *the paths of patience*. Children would follow these trails through the hills, believing they led to hidden springs or old stories.

In old Kurdish villages, the tortoise was respected and rarely harmed. Elders said that to touch one gently brought long life and wisdom, for these creatures carried the breath of

the earth. When a tortoise died naturally, its shell was sometimes placed near a doorway or under a fig tree as a sign of protection, endurance, and good fortune. No house felt unlucky with a tortoise nearby — its presence was a blessing older than any prayer.

But as the 20th century unfolded, the fate of Pîrê Zeminê changed.
Over-harvesting for trade, new roads cutting through ancient valleys, the clearing of meadows, and the disappearance of wild plants slowly erased its world. By the mid-1900s, it had vanished from most of Ilam and Lorestan.
The last whispers of its existence came from the **Dehloran Plain** and the **lower Shaho foothills** — a few lonely sightings before silence settled over the land.

Today, the Zagros Giant Tortoise survives only in dusty museum shelves and the memories of elders who still recall meeting a slow-moving shell in their childhood fields. It stands as one of the greatest losses of Kurdish natural heritage — a reminder that even the oldest beings can disappear when the land forgets to protect them.

*The earth carried them for a thousand years,*
*then buried their silence in her heart.*

## 🌿 3.29- Final Reflection – The Quiet Blood of the Earth

*(پەیوەندییەک لە نێوان خوێن و خاک – The Silent Harmony of Stone and Breath)*

Beneath the mountains and among the stones of Kurdistan lives a quieter world — a world of ancient hearts beating slowly in the warmth of the sun.
The reptiles and amphibians of this land are not the roaring kings of the sky or the valleys; they are the **keepers of stillness**, the **silent watchers of time**.

Each lizard basking on a rock, each snake gliding through river reeds, each tortoise crossing the dusty path carries a story that began **before the rise of kingdoms**, before human footsteps marked the soil.
Their blood runs close to the earth, warm with memory, pulsing with the patience of creation.

In the whisper of dry grass or the ripple of a mountain stream, their presence is felt — invisible but eternal.
They are **the veins of the land**, binding stone to water, day to night, and past to present.

From the **Kurdistan tortoise that walks through centuries**, to the **vanished crocodile of Mesopotamia**, their endurance and their loss both speak of a truth older than our words:
that **life is not only in flight or song**, but in stillness, in waiting, in breathing the same dust that shaped us.

So when we walk the paths of Kurdistan and see a lizard sunning on a wall, or hear a frog sing after rain, let us remember —
these are **not small lives**, but **the oldest voices of the mountains**, still whispering to the wind:

“Protect what breathes in silence,
for it remembers when the world was young.”

# 🐝 Section 4 – Insects and Pollinators of Kurdistan

## *(Mêş û Parêzvanên Nûr / مێش و پارێزوانانی نوور)*

### Keepers of colour and light — the silent workers of creation

If the birds bring song and the mammals bring movement, then the insects of Kurdistan bring colour, light, and renewal. They are the smallest yet most tireless guardians of life — unseen hands that build, heal, and sustain. In every meadow, orchard, and mountain garden, these delicate beings weave an invisible harmony between flower and fruit, mountain and man.

When spring returns to Kurdistan, the air awakens with their hum. **Bees**, shining like fragments of sunlight, drift between wildflowers and orchards, gathering nectar from apple, pomegranate, and thyme. The **Kurdish honeybee** (*mêşê kurdî*), known for its resilience and golden honey, is more than an insect — it is a symbol of cooperation, hard work, and sweetness born from struggle. In many Kurdish villages, beekeeping has been a sacred craft for centuries. The honey harvested from the highlands of Hawraman, Amedi, and Halgurd is famed not only for its purity but also for its healing power.

Around the fields, **butterflies** flutter like painted dreams. Their wings — blue, orange, and emerald — tell the story of transformation and freedom. The **Kurdistan swallowtail** and the **Zagros fritillary** are among the rarest jewels of the region, embodying the short but radiant beauty of life. Children in the mountains often chase them laughing, calling them *perîyên gul* — “flower fairies” — as if each were a spirit carrying the scent of spring.

Among the stones, quiet and steady, the **ants** build their hidden cities. Each one works for the whole, carrying burdens many times its weight. In Kurdish wisdom, the ant is a

teacher of patience and collective strength; its perseverance is often praised in proverbs and tales told by elders on summer evenings.

Not far away, the **fireflies** of warm nights light up the orchards like floating sparks. Their glow is the poetry of dusk — soft, short-lived, and unforgettable. The people of Soran and Duhok once said that fireflies were “the souls of those who loved the land too much to leave,” wandering between the trees each June.

Even the humblest of insects — the **beetle**, the **cricket**, the **grasshopper** — each plays its part. Their songs and movements add rhythm to the silence of the hills. The **mantis**, poised like a green priest in prayer, has long fascinated villagers, believed to bless the fields it visits.

In Kurdistan’s rivers and streams, **dragonflies** dance above the water, flashing their translucent wings like shards of sky. They are ancient survivors, older than the mountains themselves, symbols of agility and transformation. Where dragonflies live, the water is clean; their presence marks a place of health and balance.

Insects are the unseen engineers of life — pollinating crops, enriching soil, and feeding the birds that fill our skies. Without them, the forests would fall silent and the fields would fade. Yet despite their importance, they ask for nothing: no praise, no comfort, only the freedom to work beneath the sun.

The people of Kurdistan have long lived in quiet partnership with these tiny protectors. Shepherds notice their patterns, farmers read their movements as signs of rain or drought, and poets celebrate their resilience as metaphors for human endurance. In every hive, wing, and cocoon lies a reflection of our own story — creation through effort, renewal through change, and beauty born of unity.

The insects and pollinators of Kurdistan are the **keepers of colour and light**, silent artisans of the earth who remind us that even the smallest lives carry the power to shape the world. To protect them is to protect the heart of creation itself — the glowing thread that binds every leaf, flower, and breath in this ancient land we call home.

## 🐝 4.1- Mêş Hêngwîna Kurdî / Mêşê Hêngwîn (مێش هەنگوین) — Kurdish Honeybee / The Highland Bee of Kurdistan (Apis mellifera meda)

**The Golden Spirit of the Mountains (Apis mellifera meda)**

The Kurdish honeybee, known as **Mêşê Kurdistan**, is one of the oldest living companions of the Kurdish mountains. It thrives across the highlands of **Hewraman, Şaho, Shînîwar, Amedi, Halgurd, Qandil, Bradost, Soran, Silemanî**, and through the warm valleys of **Garmiyan, Koya, Rojava, Riha, Mêrdîn, Semîsat, Wan, Urmê (Urmia), Kirmaşan, Xorawa (Khorramabad), Eqbatan (Hamedan), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, and the long Zagros spine stretching south toward **Xoristan (Khuzestan)** and the plains linked to **Neynawa (Mosul)** and **Tîsfon (Baghdad)**.
Wherever wild thyme blooms and oak forests breathe, the Kurdish honeybee weaves its golden life.

Small, dark-gold, and gentle in temperament, Mêşê Kurdistan is known for its patience and strength. It survives both the burning summers of Garmiyan and the cold winds of the high Zagros, gathering nectar from mountain thyme, pomegranate flowers, oak blossoms, and hundreds of wild herbs that grow only in Kurdistan. Its honey — deep amber, thick, and perfumed with the essence of the mountains — is treasured by healers, shepherds, and families across the land.

These bees nest in hollow walnut trees, old stone walls, rock crevices, caves, and in the traditional wooden hives built by Kurdish beekeepers. Their buzzing blends with the sound of springs and goat bells, becoming one of the quiet songs of village life.

In Kurdish culture, **beekeeping (mêşparêzî)** is not just a craft but a relationship of trust with nature. Families pass down hives from father to son, mother to daughter, teaching that bees must be approached with respect, calmness, and a clean heart.
An old saying reminds us:

**“Mêş bi yek rê şîrîn dikin.”**

*“Bees create sweetness by walking one path together.”*

Honey is used in Kurdish homes as medicine for burns, wounds, coughs, weakness, and even sadness. During **Newroz**, families mix it with walnuts; at weddings it is offered as a symbol of blessing, sweetness, and renewal.

But the bee’s world is changing. Modern pesticides, imported bee species, shrinking forests, and climate shifts have threatened the native Kurdish honeybee. Yet in remote mountains — in caves of Hawraman, on the terraces of Amedi, and the oak forests of Wan, Riha, and Kirmaşan — traditional beekeepers still protect its lineage. They carve hives from walnut wood, move colonies to cooler caves in summer, and treat bees like honoured guests.

Every drop of honey from the mountains of Kurdistan carries more than sweetness.
It holds **the memory of wildflowers**, **the breath of old forests**,
and the ancient pact between the Kurdish people and the living world.

*Golden wings among the thyme,*
*soft hum of the valley’s heart —*
*your sweetness is the story*
*of a land that still remembers harmony.*

## 🐝 4.2 – Zengî Sûre / Jenge Sûre (ژەنگی سوورە / ژەنگە سوورە)

## — The Red Wasp of Kurdistan / The Crimson Guardian (Vespa orientalis kurdistanica)

The Red Wasp of Kurdistan, **Zengî Sûrê**, is a striking and powerful insect — glowing deep crimson with two bright golden bands across its abdomen. It moves like a drop of fire through the warm air of Kurdistan. This species thrives wherever heat, stone, and fruit blossom together, spreading across **Duhok, Barzan, Amedi, Zakho, Hewlêr, Silemanî, Kalar, Kifri, Garmian**, and the river-fed farmlands of **Xaneqîn, Jalawla, Mandalî**, and the valleys leading into **Hewraman**.
Farther east, it is found from the orchards of **Ardalân, Sine, Merîwan, Paveh, Kirmaşan**, and the warm plains of **Luristan (Xoristan) and Xorawa**, down to the lowlands bordering **Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, and the river corridors that stretch toward **Tîsfon (Baghdad)** and **Neynawa (Mosul)**.
Across Bakur, Zengî Sûrê is common in the hot summers of **Mêrdîn, Riha, Êlû, Sêrt, Şirnex, Botan**, and along the rocky hills of **Amed, Dilok, Semîsat**, and the fertile belts near **Wan, Agrî, Qers, and Erzerom**.
In Rojava, it thrives around **Afrin, Serêkaniyê, Kobanê, Manbij, Qamişlo, and Derik**, nesting inside stone walls warmed by the sun.

Zengî Sûrê builds delicate, paper-like nests inside stone crevices, tree hollows, abandoned mud-brick houses, or the shaded corners of orchards. It feeds on nectar, ripe figs, mulberries, pomegranates, and smaller insects — especially caterpillars and flies — making it a natural protector of Kurdish farmlands.
Despite its fierce appearance, this wasp is not aggressive unless provoked. It prefers its work: cleaning, balancing, and guarding the summer fields.

Among Kurdish villagers, Zengî Sûrê is both respected and feared. Its deep, vibrating hum is believed to carry warnings through the air — a signal of changing weather or approaching rain. Farmers say:

**“Tevî zengî sûrê, ax çêtir dibin.”**

*“Where the red wasp circles, the land grows strong.”*

Children admire its bold colours, while elders call it **agirê havînê** — *the fire of summer*, a symbol of courage, heat, and determination.
Its presence protects orchards: by hunting pests that destroy leaves and fruit, it keeps the gardens alive through the hottest months.

But even this fiery guardian faces threats. Pesticide sprays empty orchards of life, collapsing entire wasp colonies. Modern construction seals stone walls and old trees where they once nested.
Zengî Sûrê remains resilient, but it needs safe, organic farmland, clean water, and the old orchard walls that have sheltered its kind for generations.

A flash of red
against the fig leaves —
summer’s heartbeat
hovering in the heat,
a small flame
that keeps the valley alive.

## 🐝 4.3 – Zengî Zêre / Zergete (زەنگی زێرە / زەرگەتە) — The Kurdish Yellow Wasp / The Golden Striped Hunter (Vespula kurdistanica)

he **Kurdish Yellow Wasp**, known to villagers as **Zengî Zêre**, is a fierce little hunter that fills the air of Kurdistan with its golden movement during the warm months of late summer. Its bright yellow and black bands flash like sparks as it darts through orchards, vineyards, walnut groves, and mountain gardens from **Amed, Wan, Mêrdîn, Riha, and Şirnex** to the fertile valleys of **Kirmaşan, Sine, Xorawa, Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, and the plains around **Neynawa, Tîsfon**, and the wide warm fields stretching deep into **Rojava**. It thrives as easily in the orchards of **Hewlêr, Duhok, Koya, Sulaymaniyah**, and **Ardalan**, as it does in the foothills of **Dersim, Çewlîk, Semîsat, Dilok, Xarpêt**, and the gardens near **Urmê (Urmia)**.

Small, fast, and perfectly built for the heat, it hunts tirelessly — swooping through air and grass to catch flies, caterpillars, grasshoppers, and other insects that threaten crops. Every movement is exact and sharp, the behaviour of a creature made for precision.
Its nests — delicate structures of grey paper — are hidden in the dry ground, under tree roots, between stones, or tucked inside old walls where no one looks. Each nest is crafted from chewed wood fibres mixed with saliva, a fragile fortress shaped by instinct and the rhythm of summer.

In Kurdish tradition, the Zengî Zêre is both **feared and respected**. Children learn early not to disturb its nest, but older villagers always speak of its bravery. They say:
**“Zengî Zêre li dijî baran jî têkeve.”**
*“The yellow wasp fights even the storm.”*
A small warrior that does not retreat, no matter how great the wind.
Farmers admire it quietly, knowing its presence means fewer pests in the orchard and healthier trees heavy with fruit. Its buzzing warmth is a sign that summer is at its height — a symbol of labour, energy, and the living pulse of the land.

Ecologically, the Zengî Zêre is a guardian.
By hunting harmful insects, it keeps orchards balanced and clean.
By visiting flowers, it becomes an unexpected pollinator.
Even its fierce reputation hides a truth: without these little protectors, many Kurdish gardens would lose their natural defence.

Yet their colonies have begun to shrink.
The overuse of pesticides, burning of abandoned fields, destruction of old mud-brick walls, and disturbance of nesting sites have harmed their numbers across many regions.
To protect Zengî Zêre is to protect the orchards, vineyards, and fields of Kurdistan itself — to allow this golden warrior to continue its ancient work beneath the summer sun.

*Small flame of the orchard,*
*buzzing heart of the heat,*
*you guard the fruit with fire,*
*your wings stitching summer into the wind.*

## 🦋 4.4- Pepuleî Kurdistan / Perîya Kurdistanê

### (پەپوولەی کوردستان / پەریيا کوردستان) — The Kurdistan Swallowtail / The Highland Butterfly of Freedom (Papilio machaon kurdistanica)

The Kurdistan Swallowtail, known among villagers as the **Perîya Zagrosê** — the Fairy of Zagros — is one of the most delicate and enchanting creatures of Kurdish nature. It appears in the high meadows and river valleys where snowmelt feeds the earth: the alpine slopes of **Halgurd, Zagros, Gara, Bradost**, the breezy ridges of **Qandil and Şaho**, the highlands of **Ardalân and Sine (Sanandaj)**, and the spring pastures around **Urmê (Urmia)**. In Bakur, it dances above the flowered hills of **Dersim, Çewlîk (Bingöl), Agirî, Qers, Erzerom, Wan**, and the quiet valleys of **Mêrdîn**. Farther west, it glides through the green pockets of **Riha (Urfa)**, **Semîsat (Adıyaman)**, **Dilok (Antep)**, and the gentle riverlands of **Xarpêt (Elazığ)** and **Erzingan**.
Wherever spring paints the mountains with colour, the swallowtail rises with the light.

With wings of golden yellow bordered in black, brushed with blue crescents and a touch of red fire, it is one of the most striking butterflies of the Middle East. It emerges between **April and July**, when the wind carries the fragrance of wild thistles, mountain mint, and clover. Moving from flower to flower, it gathers nectar with a grace that seems almost otherworldly. But the swallowtail is more than beauty — it is a pollinator of the highlands, carrying life between blossoms and helping the mountain meadows breathe each year.

In Kurdish folklore, butterflies are called **Perîyên Gul** — the Flower Fairies — believed to be gentle souls of spring rising from the soil. Children run after them laughing, while elders say:
**“When a butterfly rests near you, spring has chosen your heart.”**
Its life is brief, fragile, and brilliant, mirroring the Kurdish spirit — vulnerable to storms and seasons, yet forever returning with colour, hope, and quiet courage.

The Perîya Zagrosê belongs to wild and undisturbed lands. When the air grows warm, it drifts over the cold rivers of **Gara and Halgurd**, along the slopes of **Şaho**, past the orchards near **Hewraman**, and over the thistle fields of **Garmian** and **Khanaqin**. From the high pastures of **Colemerg (Hakkarî)** to the remote folds of **Dersim**, its wings carry the story of spring itself: renewal, freedom, and the ancient bond between mountains and sky.

Yet this fragile creature faces growing dangers. Climate change shortens the bloom of wildflowers. Overgrazing thins the meadows. Pesticides in the agricultural plains from **Garmian** to **Dilok** poison the nectar it depends on. With every vanished butterfly, the mountains lose a small part of their song — a whisper of renewal that once filled the valleys every spring.

*Gentle wing of sunlight,*
*fairy of the flowering stones —*
*you rise where winter dies,*
*carrying the breath of spring on fragile gold.*

## 🦋4.5- Perîya Zagrosê / Pepuleî Zagros (/ پەپوولەی زاگرۆس / پەرییەی زاگرۆس) — The Zagros Fritillary / The Butterfly of the Mountain Blossoms (Melitaea kurdistanica)

The Zagros Fritillary, known to villagers as the **Perîya Kurdistanê**, is a small burst of sunlight born from the soil of the high mountains. It flutters through the meadows and foothills of the great Zagros chain — from **Mariwan, Shaho, Hewraman, and the Khurmal Valley** to the cool ridges of **Halgurd**, the green slopes around **Sine (Sanandaj)** and **Ardalân**, and the open pastures along the edges of **Kirmaşan** and **Urmê (Urmia)**. Farther north, its cousins appear across the spring fields of **Çewlîk (Bingöl)**, the wild valleys of **Dersim**, the rocky gardens of **Bradost and Qandil**, and even the cooler meadows near **Amed**, **Mêrdîn**, and **Dilok (Antep)** when the rains are generous. Wherever the mountains awaken with colour, the Fritillary writes its brief poem in the air.

Its wings glow in shades of **orange, black, and ivory**, as if woven from threads of an ancient Kurdish kilim and released to dance above the grass. It loves warm, open grasslands filled with daisies, clovers, wild thyme, and mountain poppies — fields that turn into silent festivals every spring. Its flight is soft and trembling, rising only a little above the earth before settling again on a flower head, as if the butterfly knows its time is short and every moment must be gentle.

In Kurdish poetry, this butterfly is called **çavkaniya rojê** — *the eye of the sun*. It appears when the first real warmth touches the mountain slopes after winter, a sign that the earth is breathing again. Farmers say,
**“When the orange wings dance, the earth smiles again.”**
To shepherds and beekeepers, its arrival means the wildflowers will soon burst into full bloom, feeding honeybees, renewing pastures, and bringing life back to the hills.

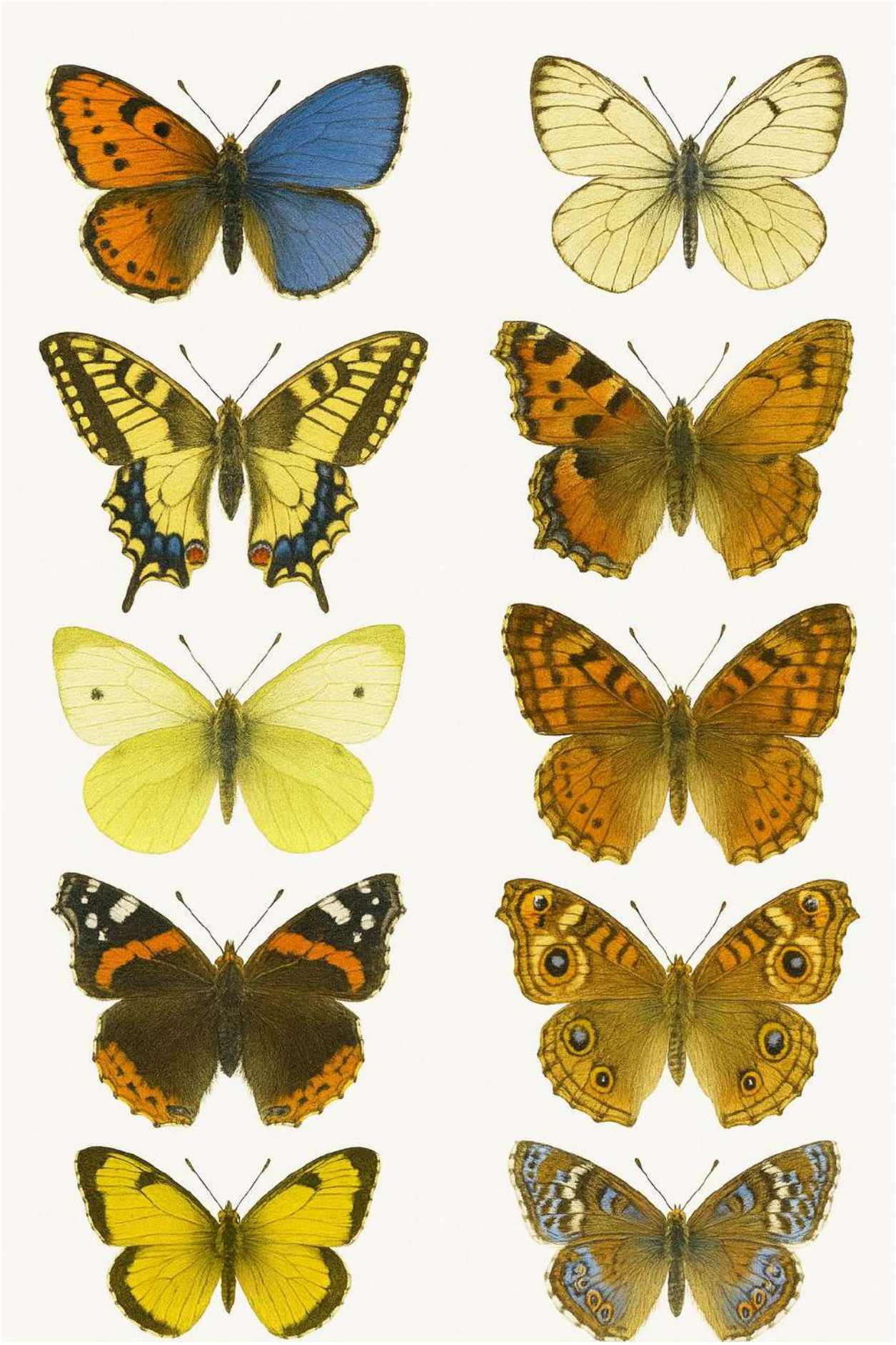
Like all butterflies, the Perîya Kurdistanê is a silent caretaker of the mountains. As it moves from blossom to blossom, it pollinates the flowers that feed the land — plants

that fatten livestock, heal soil, and keep riversides alive. Its wings carry more than colour; they carry the renewal of spring itself.

But this fragile beauty is threatened. Overgrazing strips the hills of the wildflowers it depends on. In agricultural valleys from **Garmian** to **Xaneqîn**, pesticides poison the nectar of its blossoms. Climate change pushes spring higher into the mountains each year, shrinking the meadows where the Fritillary once thrived.
Only in protected highlands — like the slopes of **Halgurd National Park**, the quiet meadows of **Shaho**, and the hidden valleys of **Dersim** — does its population still survive with some strength.

Its gentle flight reminds us that beauty in nature is never guaranteed. It exists only where land and people live in balance — where the mountains are given time to breathe, and where the hands that work the soil remember to leave space for the small, bright miracles of spring.

*Orange wings of the sunrise,*
*breathing colour into stone —*
*you touch the earth so lightly,*
*yet carry the spring alone.*



## 💡🐞✨ 4.6 –Şevrojê Kurdistanê / Şevroj / Qun Estêre

## (شەورۆژی کوردستان / شەورۆژ / قوون ئەستێرە) — The Kurdistan Firefly / The Glow of the Night Orchards (Lampyris noctiluca kurdistanica)

The Kurdistan firefly, known in some villages as **Perîya Ronahiyê**, is a wandering spark of summer — a tiny lantern carried by the night itself. It glows along the humid orchards and riverbanks of **Soran and Duhok**, where fig trees and walnut groves breathe out sweetness after sunset. But its gentle green light also appears across the quieter river valleys of **Hewraman, Khurmal, Kirmaşan**, and the warm foothills near **Sine (Sanandaj)** and **Ardalân**.
Farther north, its shimmer is seen in the apricot gardens of **Dersim**, the mulberry orchards of **Çewlîk (Bingöl)**, the damp night-fields near **Amed**, the old gardens of **Mêrdîn**, and the summer plains around **Riha (Urfa)**, **Dilok (Antep)**, and **Xarpêt (Elazığ)**. Wherever nights remain dark and the air holds the quiet breath of rivers, the firefly rises like a floating thought.

Each June, just as warm winds settle across the Zagros slopes, the fireflies awaken. Their bodies are small and humble, but their glow — a soft green ember shining from the abdomen — turns orchards into shimmering constellations. They drift through vineyards, olive groves, and fruit gardens, signalling to one another in patterns older than memory. In the wet grasses along irrigation streams from **Garmian** to **Xaneqîn**, their lights pulse gently, marking the beginning of true summer in Kurdistan.

In Kurdish imagination, fireflies have always been more than insects. Elders say they are the **souls of those who loved their land too deeply to leave**, wandering lights that return each summer to bless the trees. Children chase them at twilight, calling them **“rojên şevê” — the daylights of night**, believing that catching a single glow brings good luck for the coming harvest.

Beyond their magic, fireflies are guardians of the land. They feed on pest larvae and keep balance in gardens, meadows, and marshy fields. Their presence tells the truth about the earth: fireflies appear only where the soil is clean, where water still holds life, and where darkness — that ancient refuge of nature — has not been swallowed by the lights of cities.

But these gentle lights grow fewer each year.
Street lamps steal the darkness they need to glow.
Pesticides poison the larvae hidden in the soil.
Expanding towns erase the quiet fields where they once floated freely.

To protect the fireflies is to protect the poetry of Kurdish summer nights. Their glow reminds us that the smallest lives can carry the greatest wonder, and that even a tiny green light drifting between apricot leaves can speak of belonging, memory, and the living heart of the land.

*Little flame of the orchard,*
*wandering star among leaves —*
*you teach the night to shine,*
*and teach our hearts to see.*

## 🦗 4.7 – Killo Keske / Kilokê Keske / Pîspîsa (پیسپیسا / کەسکەکللۆ)

## — The Mountain Katydid / The Green Musician of the Meadows (Tettigonia kurdistanica)

The Mountain Katydid, known to villagers simply as **Stranvanê Çiyayê** — the Singer of the Mountains — is a graceful, leaf-green insect that lives among the tall grasses, orchards, and summer fields of northern and eastern Kurdistan. It hides effortlessly among walnut leaves in **Soran and Duhok**, sways on apricot branches in **Dersim and Çewlîk (Bingöl)**, and clings to vine stems in the evening breeze of **Amed** and **Mêrdîn**. Its soft green body mirrors the meadows of **Hewraman**, the orchards of **Bradost and Penjwen**, and the warm grasslands stretching toward **Sine, Ardalân, Kirmaşan**, and the foothills around **Urmê (Urmia)**.
Wherever the summer grows still and the vegetation rises tall, the katydid becomes part of the landscape's quiet music.

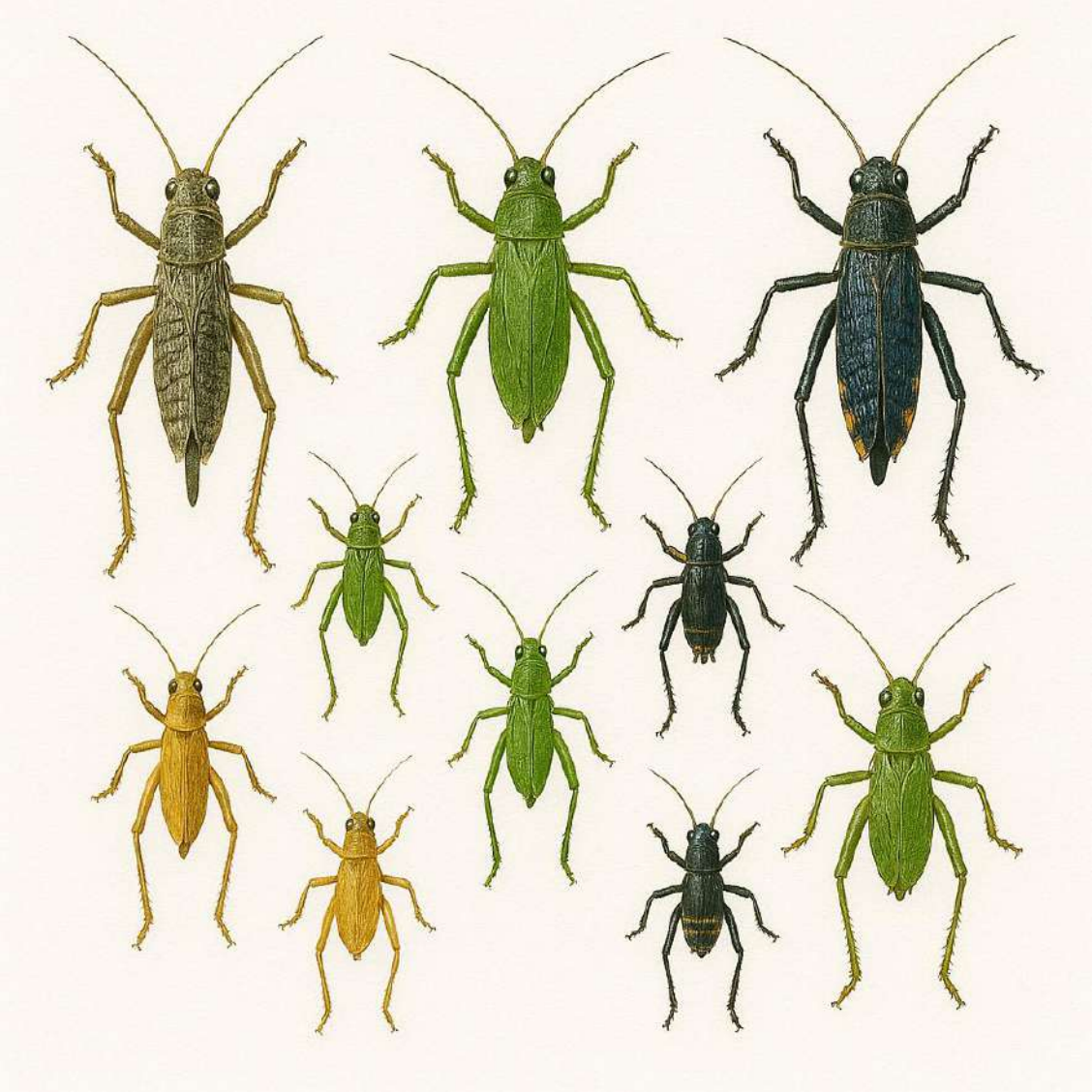
Large yet delicate, with long, threadlike antennae and fragile wings shaped like folded leaves, it disappears into the grass with astonishing ease. As dusk settles across the mountains, the males begin their song — a steady, shimmering sound created by rubbing their wings together. It rises like a harp played in secret, filling valleys from **Colemêrg (Hakkarî)** and **Şirnex** to **Dilok (Antep)**, **Semîsat**, **Xarpêt (Elazığ)** and **Erzingan**, drifting across orchards and meadows until the stars take their places overhead.

For Kurdish villagers, this song is the heartbeat of summer. Elders say,
**"When the katydid falls silent, the rain is near."**
Children used to keep them in small reed cages, listening to their gentle music as they drifted to sleep. Farmers believed their presence meant the grasses were healthy and the soil alive. The katydid is both a musician and a caretaker — feeding on excess plant matter, trimming the vegetation, and becoming prey for birds, hedgehogs, and small mammals that rely on the balance of the meadow.

But the places where the mountain singer once thrived are shrinking. Chemical fertilisers seep into the soil, and pesticides silence both insects and the birds that depend on them. The grassy meadows where its green wings once shimmered — from **Garmian, Kifri, Xaneqîn**, to the summer terraces of **Wan, Qers, Erzerom** — are slowly being replaced by concrete and intensive agriculture.

And yet, in the untouched hills of **Dersim**, the orchards of **Hewraman**, and the quiet summer fields above **Amed**, the katydid still lifts its harp-like voice each evening — a reminder that the mountains sing not with stone, but with the fragile lives that call them home.

*Green musician of the meadows,*
*your song carries the warmth of dusk —*
*a small echo of summer,*
*soft as breath on grass.*



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## 🌺 4.8 – Rêwê Mirazê / Balbalokei Kesk

### (ڕێوێ میرازێ / بالبالوکەی کەسک / دووخاز) — The Kurdistan Praying Mantis / The Saint of the Fields (Mantis religiosa kurdistanica)

The Kurdistan Praying Mantis, known among villagers as **Rêwê Mirazê — the Saint of the Fields**, moves silently through the orchards, vineyards, and sunlit grasslands of the Kurdish homeland. Its tall green body mirrors every shade of the Zagros foothills,

blending perfectly among the vine leaves of **Sine, Kirmaşan, Xorawa (Khorramabad), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, and the orchard belts stretching across **Hewraman, Ardalân, Sne, Ilam**, and the warm valleys of **Garmian, Kalar, Kifri, Xaneqîn**, and the river-fed plains near **Neynawa (Mosul)**.
It stands motionless on thistles and grape stems, folded hands held in the posture of prayer, waiting with ancient patience for a passing insect. Flies, aphids, grasshoppers — all become part of its quiet diet, making this mantis one of the most important natural protectors of Kurdish farmlands.

Its triangular head turns with a strangely thoughtful grace, eyes following every movement like a small green sage watching the world. Children often stop when they see one, whispering so as not to disturb it, for the mantis seems more like a tiny monk than an insect.

In Kurdish folklore, Rêwê Mirazê is a symbol of guidance and blessing. Elders say that when a mantis appears on a vine, that year's grapes will be sweet. When it stands on wheat, the harvest will be kind.
One old saying goes:
**"Dema rêwê mirazê ser axê rabe, baranê xêr tê."**
"When the saint of the fields rises on the soil, good rain is coming."

Farmers once believed the mantis carried prayers from the land to the sky, its raised arms calling for balance between humans and earth. Because of this, harming a mantis was considered disrespectful to the fields themselves.

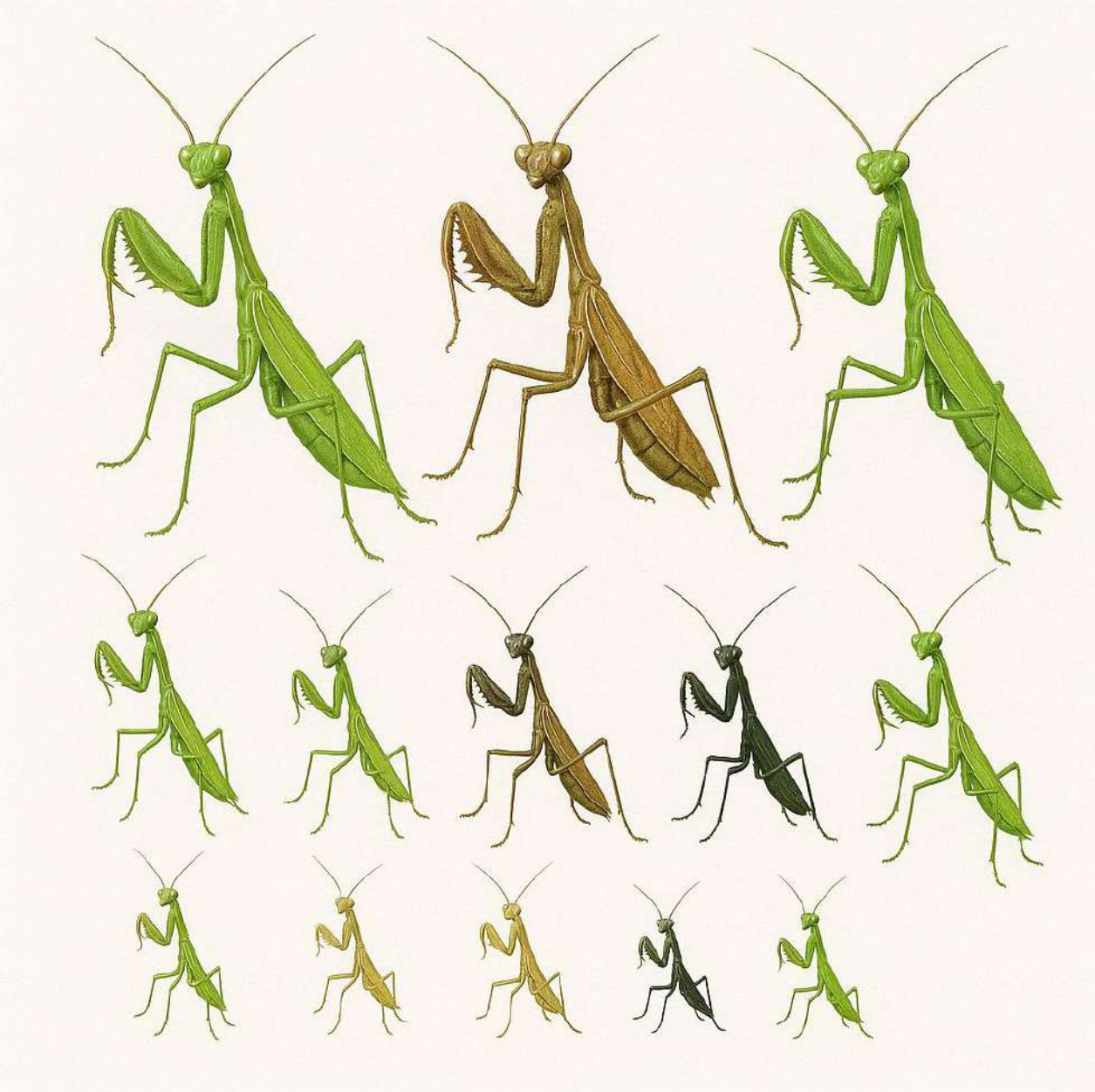
Its life is a quiet cycle of patience and precision — spring emergence, summer hunting, and autumn eggs hidden carefully beneath leaves and stones, ensuring the next generation survives the cold months.

But its world is changing. In places where heavy pesticides are used, the Rêwê Mirazê disappears, and with it, the natural balance that kept fields healthy for centuries. Traditional farming areas, where vineyards still drink from ancient springs and orchards bloom without chemicals, remain its safest home.

Wherever the mantis stands — among pomegranate trees near **Mêrdîn and Riha**, in the vineyards of **Dersim**, or the apricot groves of **Wan and Erzingan** — it brings a quiet message:

*Patience protects.*
*Balance heals.*
*And the land listens to those who care for it.*

Rêwê Mirazê remains one of the most beloved guardians of Kurdish agriculture — a slender, green whisper of harmony moving gently through the fields of its ancient homeland.



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## 🥜 4.9 – Gurgulê Avê / Zilbequnei Avê / Dêwreşê  Avê

**(گورگوولەی ئاڤێ / زلبەقوونەی ئاو / گورگوولۆکەی ئاڤێ) — The Kurdish River Dragonfly / The River Watcher of Kurdistan (Gomphus kurdistanicus)**

The Kurdish River Dragonfly, known among villagers as **Gurgulê Avê** — *the watcher of the river* — glides like a fragment of sunlight above the waterways of Kurdistan. It lives

wherever clear, slow-moving rivers thread through the mountains: in the emerald valleys of **Rawanduz, Rêwandiz, Soran, Barzan**, along the cool currents of **Penjwen, Halabja, Sharbazher**, and the riverbanks of **Silemanî (Sulaimani), Dukan, Darbandikhan**, and the winding **Sirwan**.
Farther west, it dances over the springs and wetlands of **Rojava**, from **Afrin and Kobanê** to the quiet streams near **Qamişlo and Derik**.
In the eastern Zagros, it appears near the waters of **Ardalân, Sine, Merîwan, Paveh, Kirmaşan**, and the rolling foothills of **Xorawa (Khorramabad), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, reaching southward toward the river-fed plains of **Neynawa (Mosul)** and **Tîsfon (Baghdad)**.

Broader-bodied than the alpine dragonflies of Halgurd and Gara, Gurgulê Avê carries a bright yellow-and-black abdomen that flashes like polished amber in the sun. Its wings are clear and delicate, catching every glimmer of light as it skims the river surface. Though it spends most of its young life hidden — a nymph beneath stones and river sand — it rises in late spring, living only a few short weeks in the open air.
Its life is brief, but in those weeks it carries the wisdom of water and the memory of mountains.

For the Kurdish people, this dragonfly is a sign. Fishermen of **Amedi, Duhok, Zakho**, and the lakes near **Wan (Van)** used to say:
**“Li derîyê ku gurgulê dilîze, masî têr dibin.”**
*“Where the river dragonfly dances, the fish will flourish.”*
To see it is to know the water is clean, the river alive. Children chase its quick flicker along orchards and riverbanks, believing it to be a messenger of the water spirits. Elders say that when Gurgulê Avê hovers silently above a spring, the water there will remain pure for the year.

Like all dragonflies, it is both guardian and hunter. By feeding on mosquitoes and tiny insects, it keeps the river valleys balanced and alive. Its presence ties together the ancient chain between water, air, and earth — a living pulse of Kurdistan’s veins.

But its world grows more fragile each year. Pollution darkens once-clear rivers; dams slow and silence ancient currents; pesticides wash down from orchards into the veins of the land. Wherever the Gurgulê Avê disappears, it is a warning — the river has begun to forget its own voice.

Yet in the untouched valleys of **Hewraman, Zagros, Qandil, Shaho**, where waters still run clear beneath the shadow of ancient cliffs, the Kurdish River Dragonfly still dances — a brief eternity of light, motion, and memory.

Over silver water
it writes its name in sunlight —
a living breath of the river,
rising, fading, returning
as long as the mountains remember.

## 🥜 4.10 – Dêwreşê Avê / Zilbequnei Rengîn / Dêwreşê Kurdistanê (دێورەشی ئاوێ / زلبەقوونەی ڕەنگین) — The Kurdistan Dragonfly / The Blue Spirit of the Streams (Calopteryx kurdistanica)

The Kurdistan Dragonfly, known lovingly as **Dêwreşê Avê** — the Saint of the Waters — glides above the rivers, springs, and mountain ponds of the Zagros range like a moving thread of light. Its slender body shimmers in metallic turquoise, emerald, and deep blue, glowing as it darts over the cool streams of **Penjwîn, Amedî, Bradost, Soran, Duhok**, and the lush foothills of **Hewraman and Ardalân**. You can see them dancing above the river stones of **Sine, Kirmaşan, Urmê**, and the freshwater paths flowing toward **Garmian, Kifri, and Xaneqîn**.
Wherever the water runs clear — from the springs of **Şaho** to the forested ravines of **Çewlîk (Bingöl)**, **Dersim**, and the quiet river bends near **Wan, Qers, Erzerom, and Colemêrg (Hakkarî)** — the dragonfly becomes a living spark of the afternoon sun.

Elegant and ancient, it is a creature older than mountains. Dragonflies begin life not in the sky but beneath the surface — as underwater nymphs living among reeds and stones for months or even years. Then one morning, they rise from the river, break through their old skin, and take flight. Because of this transformation, Kurdish elders say they carry the memory of water and sky together.

Their wings flash like fragments of the heavens as they chase midges and mosquitoes above the Sirwan River, the Little Zab, and the mountain ponds near **Duhok, Akrê**, and the wild plateaus around **Sêrt, Mêrdîn, Riha, Dilok, and Semîsat**. With each swift turn, they help keep nature balanced — protecting the streams from swarms of biting insects and guiding the flow of life along the water's edge.

In Kurdish folklore, Dêwreşê Avê is a sacred wanderer. People once believed that when a dragonfly hovered above a spring, the water there would never dry or sour. Children were told,

**“If the dragonfly circles three times, the spring has a guardian.”**
Some say they are messengers between the spirits of water and the breath of the wind — tiny saints that bless the places where water still runs freely.

But their world is thinning. Pollution from farming, pesticides, river diversion, and the draining of wetlands silence their wings in places where they once shimmered in hundreds. The rivers of **Hewraman, Urmê, and Garmian**, once bright with their metallic dance, are threatened by chemicals and drought.

Still, wherever clean water survives — in the hidden springs of **Şaho**, the cool channels of **Amed**, the shaded streams of **Dersim**, and the mountain pools of **Colemêrg** — the dragonflies return each summer, turning sun into motion. Their presence is a sign that the land is breathing well. Their absence is a warning whispered in silence.

*Child of water,*
*flash of sky,*
*you rise where the earth is pure —*
*a moving prayer above the rivers.*

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## 🐜 4.11 – Merûle / Merûla (مێروولە / مێروو ) — The Kurdish Ant / The Worker of the Earth (Formica kurdistanica)

The Kurdish Ant, known in villages simply as **Formîka**, is one of the quiet architects of Kurdistan’s soil. Beneath the fields, orchards, forests, and mountain meadows of the

homeland, these tiny builders create vast underground cities. Their colonies spread through the warm valleys of **Garmian, Kalar, Kifri, Xaneqîn, Khanaqin, Jalawla**, across the orchards of **Hewraman, Ardalân, Sine (Sanandaj), Kirmaşan**, and through the fertile earth of **Xorawa (Khorramabad), Baxtiyarî, Kewegle**, and the plains stretching toward **Neynawa (Mosul)** and **Tîsfon (Baghdad)**.
In the northern lands, they thrive in the chestnut forests of **Dersim**, the cool grasslands of **Erzerom, Qers, Agrî, Artvîn**, the oak woodlands of **Amed, Şirnex, Colemêrg**, and the river meadows surrounding **Wan, Bêdlês, Mêrdîn, Riha, Dilok, Semîsat, Xarpêt, Erzingan**, and even the windy highlands of **Arta**.

Small as a grain of lentil, yet strong beyond measure, each worker ant carries pieces of seeds, leaves, and soil many times its own weight. Together they carve tunnels that breathe like living lungs — regulating heat in summer, protecting the queen in winter, storing food with astonishing care. What a single ant cannot do, a nation of ants completes with ease. Their world is unity, patience, order, and tireless work — a perfect society beneath our feet.

In Kurdish culture, the ant is a teacher. Elders tell children:
**“Xurt di pênc salan de xwe ava dike.”**
*“The ant builds its home over five years.”*
A reminder that patience shapes mountains, and even the smallest creature creates miracles through persistence.
Shepherds admire them as symbols of discipline. Women gathering herbs often stop to watch their endless procession and say, *“Liq li xurtê ye ku ax bihar tê.”* — “It is the ant who knows when spring truly arrives.”

Ants are guardians of the earth. Their tunnels aerate the soil, allowing air and water to reach deep roots. They disperse seeds of mountain herbs, helping new life spread across the pastures. They recycle leaves and organic matter, turning decay into nourishment. Without them, the earth hardens; with them, the land breathes.

Yet even these ancient engineers face danger. Pesticides poison the ground where they work. Urban expansion covers the soil in concrete. Where chemicals replace traditional farming, Formîka Kurdistanê disappears — and with it, the hidden heartbeat of the soil.

But in the untouched hills of **Hewraman, Soran, Barzan**, the pine forests of **Gara**, and the quiet meadows beneath **Qandil, Zagros, Shaho**, the Kurdish ant still thrives — a reminder that greatness does not require size, only purpose.

Beneath the earth's skin,
they build cities of patience —
silent nations of strength
carrying the memory of the land.

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## 💩 4.12 – Dupişke Zerd (دووپشکەی زەرد) — The Kurdish Yellow Scorpion / The Golden Guardian of the Stones (Androctonus crassicauda kurdistanicus)

The **Kurdish Yellow Scorpion**, known as **Mêrîşkê Zêrd**, is one of the oldest survivors of Kurdistan's deserts and dry plains — a creature carved by heat, stone, and silence. It lives across the warm lowlands and rocky foothills of the Kurdish homeland, from the sun-baked valleys of **Halabja, Kalar, Garmian, Khanaqin, Xaneqîn**, and **Mandalî**, to the stony earth around **Jalawla, Kifri**, and the foothills beneath **Hewraman**.
Farther west it is found in the semi-desert landscapes around **Riha (Urfa), Mêrdîn, Semîsat, Dilok (Antep), Şirnex**, and **Êlû (Batman)**, and in the hot plains stretching toward **Neynawa (Mosul)** and the ancient lands once linked to **Tîsfon**.
To the east it thrives in the dry climates of **Urmê (Urmia), Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan,**

**Xorawa (Khorramabad), Xoristan (Khuzestan)**, and the oak-shadowed valleys of **Baxtiyarî** and **Kewegle**.
Anywhere the ground cracks with heat and stones hold the warmth of the sun at night, the Mêrîşkê Zêrd makes its home.

Small yet unmistakably fierce, it grows **8–10 cm**, its body glowing with pale gold, while the venom bulb at the end of its curved tail gleams a dark warning. By day it hides under stones, roots, and broken walls to escape the burning sun; by night it emerges, gliding silently over the warm earth to hunt insects, spiders, and other small creatures. Its movements are precise and deliberate, shaped by thousands of years of life in the desert.

In Kurdish folklore, the Mêrîşkê Zêrd is a creature of **fear, respect, and justice**. People say:
**“Mêrîşkê zêrd bê sedem nedixe.”**
*“The yellow scorpion never strikes without reason.”*
It is seen not as a mindless attacker but as a symbol of protection, endurance, and self-defence — a reminder that even the smallest being carries dignity.
Many elders believe that a scorpion entering a home is a sign that the land around the house is disturbed or thirsty, and that nature is calling attention to imbalance.

Its role in the ecosystem is far greater than most realise. By hunting harmful pests and insects, it protects orchards, vineyards, and crops across the dry regions of Kurdistan. Without this golden guardian, many agricultural landscapes would be overwhelmed by destructive insects.

Yet the Mêrîşkê Zêrd is increasingly threatened.
The destruction of rocky habitats, burning of fields, modern construction, and widespread pesticide use have reduced its hunting grounds across many regions. Most scorpions are killed out of fear, even though they rarely attack unless provoked.

To protect the Mêrîşkê Zêrd is to honour one of Kurdistan’s oldest and most resilient creatures — a being that has survived deserts, storms, and centuries of change.

*Golden spark in the night,*

*silent walker of the stones,*

*your sting is the desert's warning,*

*your patience older than mountains.*

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## 4.13 – Dupişke Reş û Qehwêi (دووپشکەی ڕەش و قاوەیی) — The Kurdish Black & Brown Scorpion / The Shadow Guardian of the Zagros (Androctonus kurdistanicus / Hottentotta kurdistanicus)

The **Kurdish Black and Brown Scorpion**, known across the land as **Dupişke Reş** or **Dupişke Qehwê**, is one of the most iconic creatures of the Zagros and Mesopotamian foothills — a silent guardian shaped by heat, stone, and ancient earth. It lives wherever the land cracks with dryness: in the rocky terraces of **Zaxo, Amedi, Dihok, Bradost**, the

warm lowlands of **Kifri, Aghjalar, Garmian**, and the river-fed soils of **Mandalî, Xaneqîn**, and **Jalawla**.
Farther east it inhabits the stony ground around **Wirme (Urmia), Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan, Ilam, Xorawa (Khorramabad)** and the mountain borders of **Luristan, Baxtiyarî**, and **Kewegle**.
To the west it appears across the semi-desert ridges of **Mêrdîn, Riha (Urfa), Dilok (Antep), Semîsat (Adıyaman)**, and in the old villages of **Xarpêt (Elazığ), Çewlîk (Bingöl), Dersim** and its foothills.
In the south it survives in the hot plains around **Neynawa (Mosul)** and the ancient lands once tied to **Tîsfon (Baghdad)**.
Wherever shadows gather between stones and warm earth breathes after sunset, this scorpion finds its perfect home.

Its colours range from deep matte black to dark earthy brown, blending perfectly with the shadowed stones where it hides. Adults measure **7–9 centimetres**, the males slender with longer curved tails, the females broader and heavier, shaped for strength and endurance. The newborns — tiny white pearls of life — ride upon their mother's back for several days, clinging to her like living stars until their first molt. In the quiet world of desert creatures, this is one of the most touching signs of parental care.

The Dupişke Reş is a creature of night. When the sun sinks behind the mountains of **Ardalan, Soran, Amedi**, or the plains of **Kifri and Khanaqin**, it emerges silently from its crevice. Guided by vibrations and the delicate sensory hairs on its pincers, it glides across warm stones hunting beetles, spiders, centipedes, and other small wanderers of the dark. Its movement is careful, patient, and purposeful — a survivor perfected by thousands of years in Kurdistan's dry lands.

In Kurdish memory, this scorpion carries a reputation of fear and respect woven together. Many villages say:
**"دووپشکەی ڕەش هێرش ناکات، بەڵکو بەرگری دەکات."**
*"The black scorpion does not search for trouble; it stands as a protector."*
People believe it guards homes from other harmful creatures, striking only in self-defence. In folktales, the black scorpion embodies hidden strength, loyalty to one's

land, quiet endurance, and the unseen spirits that protect Kurdish mountains and villages. It is a creature believed to belong to the stones themselves — a watcher of the night.

Ecologically, the Dupişke Reş is a vital member of the dryland world. By hunting harmful insects and pests, it keeps gardens, fields, and homes in balance. Without it, many of Kurdistan's fragile ecosystems would be overwhelmed by destructive insects.

Yet, despite its importance, this ancient guardian faces growing threats: the destruction of rocky habitats for construction, burning of grasslands, collapsing mud-brick walls, pesticide-driven insect declines, and the long droughts and soil erosion brought by climate change.
Most are killed out of fear, even though they rarely sting unless provoked.

To protect the Dupişke Reş is to honour the old rhythms of the mountains — to keep alive one of the land's oldest companions, a creature that has endured storms, heat, and centuries of human history in silence.

*Shadow of stone,*
*keeper of the night's small balance,*
*you rise when the world sleeps,*
*a quiet guardian beneath the moon.*

## 🐞 4.14- Xalxalok / Xalxaloke ( خاڵخاڵۆکە، خاڵخاڵۆک) — Ladybird / Ladybug — The Guardian of Leaves and Blossoms -( Coccinella septempunctata)

The **Xalxalok**, known affectionately across Kurdistan as **Xalxaloke**, is one of the most beloved and gentle creatures of the land — a tiny red jewel wandering slowly across leaves, carrying with it stories of luck, childhood, and spring. Its bright shell of red, orange, yellow, or soft black, marked with delicate dots, glows like a bead dropped by the sun.
Wherever green returns, the Xalxalok appears — in the orchards of **Amed, Dihok, Zaxo, Amedi**, the spring meadows of **Soran, Bradost, Rawanduz**, the high fields beneath **Qandil, Şaho, Zagros**, and the cool gardens of **Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan, Xorawa (Khorramabad), Ilam**, and the plains of **Luristan, Baxtiyarî**, and **Kewegle**.

In the west it brightens the vineyards near **Mêrdîn, Riha, Dilok, Semîsat**, and the riverbanks of **Xarpêt (Elazığ), Çewlîk (Bingöl), Dersim**, and the small gardens scattered through **Êlû, Sêrt**, and **Wan**.
Farther east it lives among the blossoms of **Urmê (Urmia)**, following the spread of thistles, roses, and apricot trees.
From the mountains of **Artvîn, Arta, Bayburt, Qers**, and **Rîndik**, down to the fertile Mesopotamian plains around **Neynawa (Mosul)** and the old heartlands reaching toward **Tîsfon**, the Xalxalok is everywhere — a tiny traveller of light and leaf.

Small and round, soft in movement and harmless in temperament, this little beetle is a silent protector of Kurdistan's gardens. It feeds on aphids, mites, and plant-eating pests that destroy crops. Farmers call it **"the friend of the orchard,"** and children gently lift it on their fingertips, believing that if it crawls upward, good luck will follow. Mothers used to sing small village rhymes about Xalxalok during spring cleaning, seeing it as a symbol that winter had finally loosened its grip.

When the morning sun warms the leaves, Xalxaloke begins its slow patrol, lifting its graceful wings beneath the spotted shell, ready to fly between vines and apple

blossoms. Despite its delicate appearance, it is a fierce guardian of leaves — a small warrior that protects peaches, grapes, figs, and wheat from hungry pests.
Its flight is light, its landing gentle, its presence a blessing.

In Kurdish folklore, the ladybird is a bearer of happiness and serenity.
Many say:
*“If a ladybird rests on you, fortune wraps around you.”*
It is believed to bring messages of peace, to soften a troubled heart, and to carry the bright spirit of spring wherever it flies.

But even the smallest guardians face danger.
The Xalxalok suffers from the heavy use of pesticides, the burning of fields, urban expansion, and the loss of wildflowers. As natural meadows shrink, the safe places for ladybirds to lay their eggs disappear.
Yet in every valley where the land is still allowed to breathe — from **Qandil** to **Dersim**, from **Hewraman** to **Wan**, from **Mêrdîn** to **Urmê** — their tiny red shells still glow like small lanterns of hope.

*Red pearl of the leaf,*
*soft guardian of blossoms,*
*your wings carry spring,*
*your steps brighten the earth.*

## 🪲 4.15 – Kêwe Sefrê / Qaloçerengîne (کێوە سەفرەی / قالۆچە ڕەنگینە) — The Kurdistan Tiger Beetle / The Emerald Hunter of the Hills (Cicindela kurdistanica)

The Kurdistan Tiger Beetle, known to Kurdish children as **Kêwê Sefrê** — the Golden Beetle — is a small, fierce hunter that flashes like living metal under the summer sun. Its emerald-green shell, dotted with ivory spots, glitters along the dusty footpaths and warm riverbanks of Kurdistan. It darts across the ground faster than the eye can follow, its movements sharp and purposeful, like sparks skipping over stone.

This brilliant little predator lives in the sun-baked soils of **Hewraman, Sine (Sanandaj), Ardalân, Kirmaşan**, and the open foothills stretching toward **Urmê (Urmia)**. In Bashur it roams the dry paths of **Bradost, Rawanduz, Penjwen, Soran**, the plains of **Garmian, Kifri, Kalar**, and the warm river valleys of **Xaneqîn**. Farther north it shines in the sandy fields around **Amed, Mêrdîn, Şirnex**, and in the wildflower slopes of **Riha (Urfa)**. In Bakur's sunlit countryside — **Çewlîk (Bingöl), Dersim, Semîsat (Adıyaman), Dilok (Antep), Xarpêt (Elazığ), Erzingan, Erzerom** — its metallic glow appears wherever the soil is warm and the land is left undisturbed.

The beetle's life is one of precision. It hunts with sharp, curved jaws and eyes that see even the smallest movement. A single step on the earth sends it flashing away like a spark of gold. Each day it patrols the paths that border orchards, wheat fields, and stony meadows, catching tiny insects that would otherwise harm the crops and grasses of rural Kurdistan.
In this way, Kêwê Sefrê acts as a quiet guardian of the land — a protector so small that most people never notice its service.

Among Kurdish children, this beetle is a creature of wonder. Its glittering shell reminds them of **warrior armour** from old folktales, and its incredible speed inspires laughter and competitions to "follow the green lightning." Parents teach their children never to harm it, saying that to kill a Kêwê Sefrê is to extinguish a piece of the mountain's gold.

Like many delicate species, it depends on balance.
When farmers leave small strips of wild earth between their fields, the beetle thrives. When soil is clean and unsprayed, it returns each year. But pesticides, ploughing of every inch of land, and the hardening of riverbanks take away its home.
As the wild edges of Kurdistan shrink, so too do the flashes of green that once raced across the summer paths.

The Kurdistan Tiger Beetle is a reminder that strength does not always roar. Sometimes it glitters quietly at your feet, asking nothing, yet keeping the meadows alive.

*Green spark of the hillside,*
*golden flame on the dust —*
*your tiny steps guard the harvest,*
*your shine is the mountain's trust.*

## 🪲 4.16 – Qaloçe Reşe / Qaloxe Reşe (قالۆخە ڕەشە / قالۆچە ڕەشە) — The Kurdish Darkling Beetle / The Black Walker of the Night Sands (Blaps kurdistanica)

The **Kurdish Darkling Beetle**, known across the land as **Qaloçe Reşe**, is one of the quiet guardians of Kurdistan's dry earth — a small creature shaped by heat, dust, and night. Its home stretches across the warm plains and semi-desert hills of the Kurdish homeland: the sun-baked fields around **Koya, Chamchamal, Deir Mar Elia**, the cracked soils of **Kifri, Aghjalar, Garmian**, and the low hills leading toward **Hewraman**. Farther north it wanders among the stones of **Zaxo, Amedi, Dihok**, and the foothills around **Amed, Şirnex, Hakkarî, Êlû**, and the dry terraces of **Çewlîk, Semîsat, Dilok (Antep)** and **Mêrdîn**.
To the east it thrives across the semi-desert plains around **Urmê (Urmia), Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan**, and the hot valleys of **Xorawa, Xoristan**, and **Baxtiyarî**.
It even roams the river-fed lowlands near **Neynawa (Mosul)** and the ancient soils once connected to **Tîsfon**, as well as the warm inland belts of **Rojava**, where evening breezes stir the dust.
Wherever dry soil cracks beneath the sun and stones hold shadows, the Qaloçe Reşe walks with patient purpose.

With its jet-black shell and slow, deliberate stride, it is one of the most recognisable beetles of Kurdistan's deserts. Its body absorbs heat by day, yet it survives where many creatures cannot — hiding beneath rocks and roots until darkness softens the air.
When night comes, it emerges silently to feed on decaying vegetation, fallen leaves, and the remains left behind by other creatures.
In doing so, it becomes one of the desert's most essential workers: breaking down waste, renewing tired soil, and keeping the arid land alive.

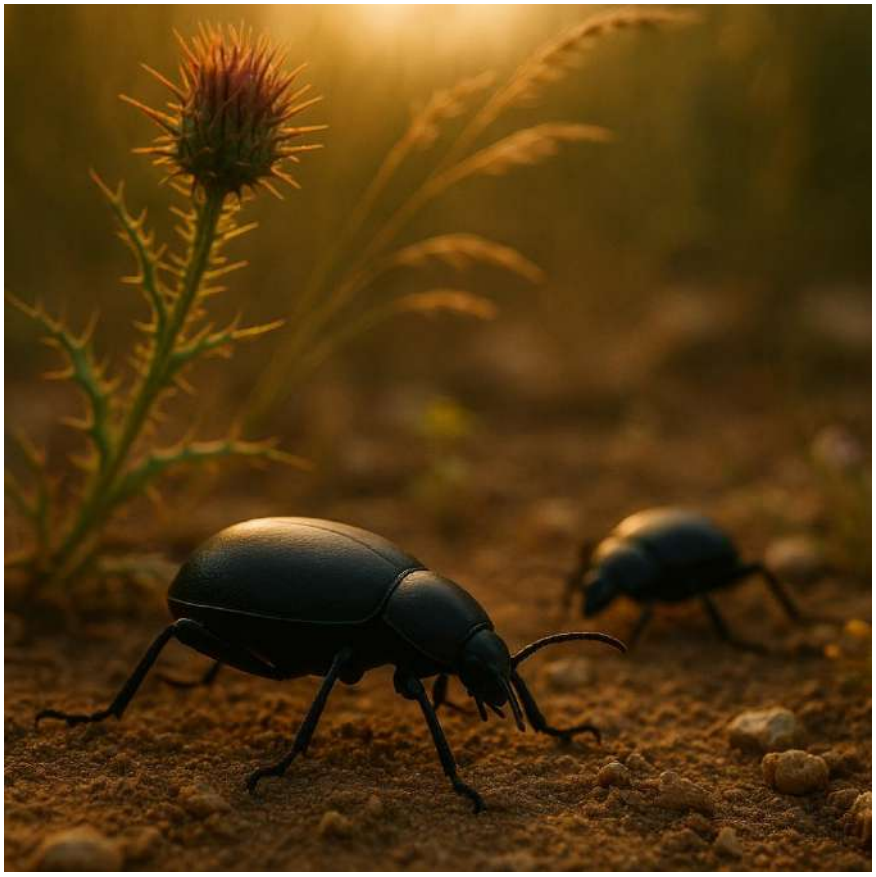
In Kurdish folklore, the Qaloçe Reşe is fondly called **"paqijkarê şevê" — the night cleaner**.

Children in rural villages are told that it "**sweeps the earth for the morning**," ensuring that the land wakes fresh and ready for the new day. Though small, it carries a reputation of service and humility — a creature that works in silence while the world sleeps.
Older villagers say that where Qaloçe Reşe walks, **the soil will remain healthy**, for it transforms death and decay into life.

Its ecological role is far greater than its size suggests. By turning dry leaves and organic matter into fertile soil, it maintains the desert's delicate balance. Many animals — lizards, hedgehogs, night birds, and even small mammals — rely on it as a steady source of food. Without the Qaloçe Reşe, the deserts and semi-dry plains of Kurdistan would slowly lose their life and rhythm.

Though hardy and resilient, this beetle faces growing dangers. Habitat loss from construction, burning of dry fields, and heavy pesticide use have damaged the ecosystems it depends on. These chemicals reduce the beetle's food sources and poison the soil it tirelessly works to renew.
Protecting rocky desert habitats, leaving old stones undisturbed, and reducing chemical use in farmlands can ensure that this humble custodian continues its ancient work.

*Black pebble of the night,*
*slow heart of the desert soil,*
*you walk where silence lives,*
*turning the dead earth into life.*



## 🦟 4.17 – Moz /Mêshe Moze (مێشه مۆزه / مۆز) — The Kurdish Horsefly / The Giant Fly of the Highlands (Tabanus kurdistanicus

The **Kurdish Horsefly**, known simply as **Moz** in villages across the land, is a restless messenger of summer — a large, dark-bodied fly that circles rivers, stables, and pastures during the hottest months of the year. Its buzzing shadow is known from the fertile plains of **Koya, Chamchamal, Garmian**, and **Kifri**, to the animal-rich valleys around **Duhok, Amedi, Zaxo**, and the orchards and farmlands near **Halabja, Penjwen**, and the lower **Sirwan** river.
It thrives along the warm edges of **Hewraman**, the reeds of **Urmê (Urmia)**, the plains of **Neynawa (Mosul)**, and the ancient fields once connected to **Tîsfon**, and wanders freely through the riverbanks of **Mêrdîn, Dilok, Riha, Semîsat, Qamişlo**, and the dry belts of **Rojava**. In the east it follows the livestock paths of **Sine, Ardalan, Kirmaşan**, and the hot valleys of **Xorawa, Xoristan, Baxtiyarî**, and **Kewegle**, and even touches the foothills around **Çewlîk, Dersim, Xarpêt**, **Wan**, and **Şirnex**.
Wherever animals graze and water flows, the Moz finds its world.

Females are the fierce ones, with broad heads and bright **green or golden eyes** that glint like gemstones under the sun. Driven by the need to lay eggs, they pierce the thick skin of buffaloes, cows, horses, and even goats with sharp, blade-like mouthparts. The males, however, touch no blood at all — they float gently from flower to flower, feeding on nectar and the sweetness of plants.
Their flight is heavy and buzzing, a sound familiar to every Kurdish shepherd and farmer: the signal that true summer has arrived.

In Kurdish villages, the Moz is both a nuisance and a part of life's rhythm. Farmers laugh and say,
**"Hawîn rast nabe heta Moz bite."**
*"Summer isn't real until the horsefly bites."*
It is a creature that tests patience during harvest and herding seasons, irritating livestock and sending children running with waving hands. Yet, like many of nature's

small trials, it becomes part of the shared story of the land — a test of endurance woven into the Kurdish bond with heat, dust, and the labour of summer.

Despite its reputation, the Moz is not without value.
It helps **pollinate wildflowers**, feeding on nectar, and becomes an important food source for swallows, wagtails, bats, dragonflies, and many other summer hunters. It is a tiny but essential thread in the web of life that binds rivers, animals, and fields together.
Through this creature, the ecosystem maintains a rhythm of predators and prey, scent and movement, balance and renewal.

While not endangered, the Moz faces quiet threats.
Wetlands shrink, pastures dry, and rivers thin under the weight of climate change.
Changes in land use, draining of marshes, and the widespread use of pesticides have reduced insect populations across many regions of Kurdistan.
Even the buzzing of the Moz carries a warning: that when small creatures disappear, the threads that hold the land together begin to loosen.

*Buzzing spark of summer,*
*shadow on the river wind,*
*you test the patience of the plains,*
*yet you weave the heartbeat of the heat.*

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## 🌿 4.18 – Final Reflection – *Keepers of Colour and Light*

*(پارێزوانانی ڕووناکی و ڕەنگ – The Silent Wings of Creation)*

Among the flowers, rivers, and meadows of Kurdistan lives a world too small for most eyes to see — a world of wings, hums, and glows that hold the pulse of life itself.
The insects and pollinators of this land are not the great beasts of legend or the soaring

hunters of the sky, but the quiet architects of beauty — those who turn sunlight into sweetness, and silence into renewal.

Each bee gathering from a thyme blossom, each butterfly rising above a poppy field, each firefly glowing beneath the orchard trees carries a fragment of the land's soul. They weave unseen connections between mountain and valley, between fruit and flower, between the breath of people and the rhythm of the earth.

Their lives are brief, yet their labour is eternal — shaping every seed, every colour, every scent that sustains creation.

This section has shown only a few of them — the honeybee, the swallowtail, the mantis, the dragonfly, and others whose beauty and endurance belong uniquely to Kurdistan. Yet there are dozens more: hidden pollinators, soil builders, and light bearers whose names remain unspoken but whose presence fills every field, garden, and riverbank. The wild carpenter bees that bore into apricot wood, the bumblebees that hum through the meadows of Hawraman, the mason and leafcutter bees that build homes from petals and mud, the Gurgulê Avê (Gomphus kurdistanicus) guarding the rivers, the red admirals and painted ladies drifting through the Zagros hills, the brimstones, fritillaries, and clouded yellows colouring the air, the hoverflies and bee-flies mimicking their stinging cousins, the jewel and longhorn beetles glinting on oak bark, the tiger beetles racing across hot stones, the cicadas singing the songs of summer, the grasshoppers and crickets tuning the dusk, the wasps and hornets defending their clay nests, the ants farming aphids on wild roses, the fireflies lighting the vineyards at night, and the moths that dance unseen in the moonlight.
Each of them, a humble guardian of the land's harmony.

To protect them is to protect the heart of the land itself.
For when the last wing falls silent, the flowers forget how to bloom, and the wind forgets where to carry life.

So let us remember —
these are not mere insects, but the keepers of colour and light,

the silent workers of creation who remind us that the smallest lives often carry the greatest purpose.

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***Examples of other pollinators and insects native to Kurdistan include:***

*Carpenter bees (Xylocopa valga, X. violacea) • Bumblebees (Bombus terrestris) • Mason bees (Osmia spp.) • Leafcutter bees (Megachile spp.) • Red admiral and painted lady butterflies (Vanessa spp.) • Brimstone, fritillary, and clouded yellow butterflies (Gonepteryx, Argynnis, Colias) • Hoverflies and bee-flies (Syrphidae, Bombyliidae) • Jewel beetles, longhorn beetles, and tiger beetles • Cicadas • Grasshoppers and katydids • Wasps, hornets, and ants • Fireflies and nocturnal moths.*

# 🌳 Section 5 – Flora and Trees of Kurdistan

## (Gul û Daristan / گوڵ و دارستان)

### Roots of memory — the breath and soul of the mountains

Kurdistan is a land where the earth itself seems to dream in colour. From the snowy ridges of Halgurd to the warm plains of Garmian, every hill and valley holds a tapestry of life — wildflowers, herbs, and trees that have grown beside our people for thousands of years. They are more than plants; they are the lungs of our homeland, the medicine of our ancestors, and the silent witnesses of every joy and sorrow that has touched this land.

In spring, the meadows burst into carpets of crimson, violet, and gold. The **tulip of Kurdistan** (*gulê Kurdistanê*), delicate yet proud, rises from rocky soil as a symbol of love, beauty, and resilience. In Kurdish poetry, the red tulip often represents the blood of martyrs and the unbroken spirit of freedom — a flower born from sacrifice. The **anemone**, known locally as *gulî bermêz*, paints the slopes in waves of red and purple, blooming where the snow has barely melted. It reminds us that even the harshest winter gives way to life.

Along the mountainsides grow the **oak forests** — vast and ancient, stretching across Zagros like a living crown. The **Kurdish oak** (*darê mazî*) is the most faithful guardian of the land. Its roots hold the soil against erosion, its shade shelters shepherds and sheep, and its wood has warmed countless homes through centuries of hardship. To many villagers, the oak is sacred — a tree of endurance and generosity. When a great oak is cut, it is said that the mountain sighs.

Among the orchards of the valleys thrive **pomegranate**, **fig**, **apple**, and **walnut** trees, each woven into the fabric of Kurdish culture. The **pomegranate**, bursting with ruby seeds, symbolises fertility, unity, and life's sweetness; its juice stains both lips and

memory. The **walnut tree**, tall and wise, stands near old villages as if guarding generations beneath its branches. Children play in its shade, elders rest beside it, and its nuts fill the winter stores of every home.

Scattered through the highlands are medicinal and aromatic herbs — **thyme**, **sage**, **mint**, **wild rose**, and **chamomile** — each one a healing gift of the earth. Kurdish women have long known how to gather them at the right moon and season, drying them for teas, remedies, and sacred rituals. The scent of wild thyme carried on the wind is the very perfume of Kurdistan's mountains — sharp, pure, and unforgettable.

Higher still, on the stony slopes near Halgurd and Shaho, grows the **wild pistachio tree** (*bên*), whose fruit and resin have been treasured since ancient times. Its gum, *mastixê bên*, once traded along the Silk Road, is still used today for healing and incense. These hardy trees endure heat and drought with quiet strength, their twisted trunks standing like wise elders sculpted by wind and time.

In the marshlands of southern Kurdistan, reeds and willows sway beside slow rivers, creating a world of softness and sound. The **reed** (*qamîş*) holds a special place in Kurdish music, for from it is made the **ney** — the shepherd's flute, whose mournful tone speaks of longing and exile. Thus, even the plants of our land have voices; they sing through instruments, whispers, and fragrance.

To walk through Kurdistan's forests and fields is to walk through history itself — a living museum of roots and petals. Each plant tells a story: of survival through drought, of rebirth after fire, of coexistence with people who once lived as part of the same wild balance. Together they form the green heart of our homeland, sustaining not only the body but also the soul.

The flora and trees of Kurdistan are the **breath of the mountains**, the keepers of beauty and balance. They remind us that every leaf and blossom carries a memory, and every seed holds the promise of renewal. To honour them is to honour life itself — for as long as the oaks stand, the tulips bloom, and the thyme scents the wind, Kurdistan will remain alive, vibrant, and eternal.

## 5.1 – Introduction: The Breath of the Mountains

If the rivers are the veins of Kurdistan, then its plants are the breath that keeps them alive.
Kurdistan is a land where the earth itself seems to dream in colour. From the snowy ridges of Halgurd to the warm plains of Garmian, every hill and valley holds a tapestry of life — wildflowers, herbs, and trees that have grown beside our people for thousands of years. They are more than plants; they are the lungs of our homeland, the medicine of our ancestors, and the silent witnesses of every joy and sorrow that has touched this land.

In every season they transform the mountains: spring unfolds in colour, summer hums with scent, autumn glows in gold, and winter sleeps beneath oak and snow. These living beings are the language of the earth — speaking in fragrance, texture, and colour to all who pause to listen.

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## 5.2 – Wildflowers of the Highlands

In spring, the meadows burst into carpets of crimson, violet, and gold. The **tulip of Kurdistan (Gulê Kurdistanê)** — delicate yet proud — rises from rocky soil as a symbol of love, beauty, and resilience. In Kurdish poetry, the red tulip represents the blood of martyrs and the unbroken spirit of freedom — a flower born from sacrifice.

Beside it blooms the **anemone (Gulî Bermêz)**, painting the slopes in waves of red and purple where the snow has barely melted. The **crown anemone (Anemone coronaria)** opens like a small flame of hope, while the **wild iris (Sûsênîya Çiyayê)** and **crocus of spring (Gulî Nawroz)** brighten the stony ground in celebration of Nowruz.

Among the grasses grow **wild daffodils, orchids, poppies (Gulî Khang)**, and the small white **bellflowers** that nod gently in the mountain wind. Each petal tells of endurance — fragile yet fearless, rooted in stone and singing of renewal.

These flowers are not only colour and scent; they are the poetry of the land itself, woven like a living carpet across the hills.

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## 5.3 – The Forests of Zagros: Guardians of the Land

Stretching across the spine of Kurdistan, the oak forests of the Zagros form a living crown for the mountains. The **Kurdish oak (Darê Mazî / Quercus brantii kurdistanica)** stands as the most faithful guardian of the land. Its deep roots hold the mountain soil against erosion; its shade shelters shepherds, deer, and bees; and its fallen leaves renew the earth each autumn.

To many villagers, the oak is sacred — a symbol of endurance and generosity. When a great oak is cut, it is said that the mountain sighs.
The oak's companions — the **wild pistachio (Bên / Pistacia atlantica)**, the **terebinth (Darê Bênik)**, and the **hawthorn (Darê Hawar)** — share its silence and strength. Their fruits feed birds and bears alike, while their branches perfume the air with resin and honey.

The **wild almond** and **hawthorn blossoms** announce the return of spring with their pale petals, while in higher zones the **juniper (Darê Arar)** rises evergreen through frost and wind.

Each tree of the Zagros is a memory carved in bark — of fire survived, of rain returned, of people who once lived in harmony with their shade. Together they form the backbone of Kurdistan's green soul.

## 5.4 – The Orchards and Gardens of the Valleys

In the lower valleys where rivers wind gently through fertile soil, life softens into orchards and gardens. The **pomegranate (Hanâr)** bursts with ruby seeds, symbolising fertility, unity, and life's sweetness. Its juice stains both lips and memory — the flavour of childhood summers and harvest festivals.

The **walnut tree (Goz / Henz)** stands tall and wise near every village, its wide branches shading generations. Beneath its canopy, children play, elders rest, and birds weave nests — as though the tree itself gathers the village into its arms.

The **fig (Incir)**, **apple (Sêv)**, and **pear (Armût)** trees fill the gardens with blossoms in spring and sweetness in autumn. Their fruits are not mere food but sacred tokens of hospitality — every guest in Kurdistan is offered fruit before words.

Each garden is a living memory: planted by a father, watered by a mother, and carried in the hearts of those who left but never forgot the scent of home.

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## 5.5 – Herbs and Healing Plants of the Mountains

Scattered among the rocks and meadows grow the silent healers of Kurdistan — the herbs that have served our people for millennia. The **thyme (Çayî)**, sharp and pure, perfumes the mountain air and cleanses both body and spirit. **Sage (Merzangûş)** is gathered by women at dawn, its smoke burned to bless newborns and protect homes.

**Mint (Nane)** cools the breath and calms the stomach; **chamomile (Biyâv Gul)** brings sleep and peace; **wild rose (Gulî Bahar)** gives its petals for tea, perfume, and love charms.

These herbs are part of daily life — dried on rooftops, hung in bundles, ground into medicine, or steeped into tea. The knowledge of their use has passed from grandmother to granddaughter like a sacred inheritance.

When the scent of wild thyme rides the wind, even the tired heart of the shepherd feels at peace.

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## 5.6 – Voices of the Marshlands

In the southern plains, where the waters move slowly under a wide sky, the **reeds (Qamîş)** and **willows (Darê Serên)** sway in unison with the breeze. The reeds whisper the oldest songs of the land — for from their hollow stems is born the **ney**, the shepherd's flute, whose sorrowful voice carries the sound of longing and exile.

Along the riverbanks bloom **lotus and water lilies**, floating on mirrored light — symbols of purity and rebirth. Their roots sink into mud, yet their blossoms rise unstained toward the sun, reminding us that beauty is often born from struggle.

In this world of still water and slow wind, the plants speak softly — yet their message endures: every root must drink deeply, every stem must bend before it breaks.

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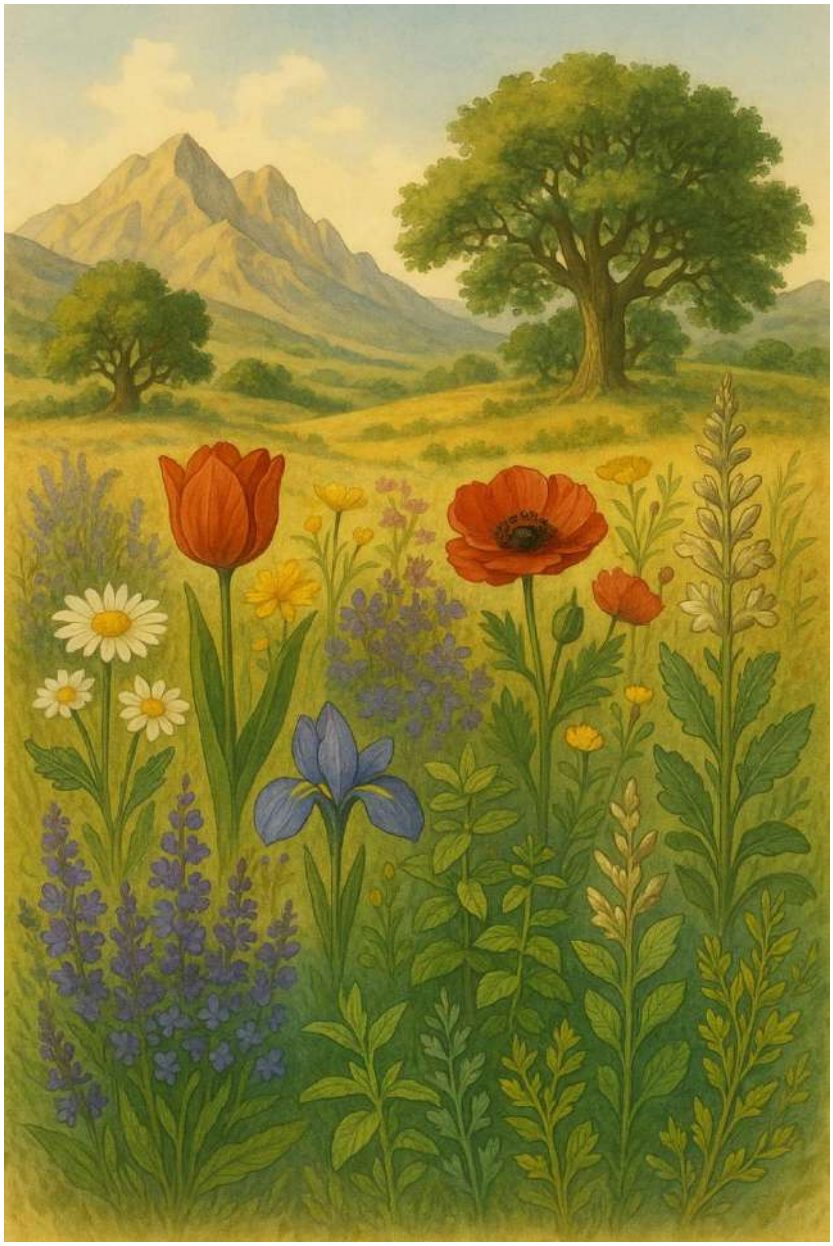
## 5.7 – Roots of Memory: The Green Heart of the Homeland

To walk through Kurdistan's forests and fields is to walk through history itself — a living museum of roots and petals. Each plant tells a story: of survival through drought, of rebirth after fire, of coexistence with people who once lived as part of the same wild balance.

The flora and trees of Kurdistan are the breath of the mountains, the keepers of beauty and balance. They remind us that every leaf and blossom carries a memory, and every seed holds the promise of renewal.

The tulip and the oak, the thyme and the reed — each holds a fragment of our identity. They are the poets and witnesses of the land, speaking not in words but in fragrance, shadow, and colour.

As long as the oaks stand, the tulips bloom, and the thyme scents the wind, Kurdistan will remain alive — green, eternal, and free.



# 🌊 Section 6 – Rivers, Springs, and Natural Landscapes of Kurdistan (Çem û SarÇawe چۆم و سەرچاوەکان )

### The flowing soul of the mountains — where every drop tells a story

Kurdistan is a land carved by water and time. Its rivers, springs, and valleys breathe life into the mountains and whisper the stories of ages long gone. Every stream carries memory — of rain that once fell on sacred peaks, of glaciers that fed the ancient plains, and of people who built their lives along the sound of running water. The land and its waters are one body, one soul, joined by the eternal rhythm of flow and return.

From the northern highlands to the southern plains, the rivers of Kurdistan shape both earth and spirit. The **Greater Zab** (*Zêbê Mezin*) and the **Lesser Zab** (*Zêbê Biçûk*) twist through the heart of the land like silver serpents, cutting deep valleys between the ridges of Halgurd, Bradost, and Qaradagh. They are not merely rivers — they are lifelines, nurturing fields, feeding forests, and sustaining thousands of years of civilisation. Along their banks stand ruins of old bridges and fortresses, silent witnesses to caravans, migrations, and forgotten kingdoms.

Further west, the **Sirwan River** (known to the ancients as the Diyala) winds gracefully through Hawraman and Darbandikhan, its turquoise waters glimmering under the sun. Its name in Kurdish means “the whispering river,” for its sound among the rocks is said to calm the restless heart. Villagers still tell tales of spirits living beneath its surface — guardians of purity and fertility.

The **Tigris** (*Dîjla*), mother of Mesopotamia, begins its long journey in the Kurdish mountains, where snowmelt and springs give birth to one of the world’s oldest rivers. It carries the breath of Kurdistan to the plains of Iraq and beyond, binding north and south in a thread of history that no border can sever. To touch its cold waters is to feel the pulse of civilisation itself.

Scattered across the highlands are countless **springs and waterfalls** — each one unique, each one sacred. The spring of **Kani Rash** in Akre, the cascades of **Gali Ali Beg**, the crystalline waters of **Ahmad Awa**, and the tranquil pools of **Halgurd's foothills** are among the most beloved jewels of the land. Locals often speak of them as living beings — eyes of the mountain, tears of the earth, or blessings from heaven. To drink from such a spring is seen as both refreshment and renewal of spirit.

The **lakes** of Kurdistan — **Dukan**, **Darbandikhan**, **Zirê**, and **Wastan** — mirror the sky like great blue mirrors. Around them, migratory birds gather in thousands, and fishermen cast their nets at dawn. These lakes, though formed by nature and time, have also been shaped by human hands and memory. Their still waters hold reflections of both beauty and sorrow, for they have witnessed exile, return, and the resilience of communities built upon their shores.

Beyond the rivers and lakes, the land itself is a masterpiece of contrasts. The **Zagros Mountains** rise with solemn majesty, clothed in oak and mist. The **plains of Garmian and Khanaqin** stretch wide and golden under the summer sun. The **valleys of Hawraman** descend like stairways carved by ancient gods — steep, terraced, and rich with orchards. And in the south, near the borders of Ilam and Kermashan, the land turns dry and fierce, where the wind sings through canyons and desert hills.

To the Kurdish soul, water is more than a resource — it is a sacred covenant between humanity and earth. In old traditions, before drinking from a spring, one would whisper *Bismilla* and leave a small stone nearby, a gesture of gratitude to nature. The rivers are also woven into songs and proverbs: *"The Zab never sleeps,"* they say, *"for it carries the dreams of the mountains."*

The rivers, springs, and landscapes of Kurdistan remind us that life flows, changes, and renews itself endlessly. They are the veins of the homeland, connecting every living being — from the eagle above to the fish below — in a single circle of existence.

To protect these waters is to protect the very spirit of Kurdistan. For when the rivers run free, the mountains breathe, and the land remembers who it is — wild, eternal, and alive.

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## 6.1 – Introduction: The Land Carved by Water

In Kurdistan, every drop of water is a memory, every stream a song, and every river a witness to life's eternal return.

Kurdistan is a land carved by water and time. Its rivers, springs, and valleys breathe life into the mountains and whisper the stories of ages long gone. Every stream carries memory — of rain that once fell on sacred peaks, of glaciers that fed the ancient plains, and of people who built their lives along the sound of running water. The land and its waters are one body, one soul, joined by the eternal rhythm of flow and return.

From the northern highlands to the southern plains, the rivers of Kurdistan shape both earth and spirit. They are not merely waterways — they are lifelines, nurturing fields, feeding forests, and sustaining thousands of years of civilisation.

## 6.2 – The Great Rivers: Lifelines of Civilisation

Flowing from the snow-crowned peaks of the Zagros and Taurus ranges, Kurdistan's rivers form the veins of its living body. Among them are the **Greater Zab (Zêbê Mezin)** and the **Lesser Zab (Zêbê Biçûk)** — two silver serpents twisting through the heart of the land. They carve deep valleys between the ridges of Halgurd, Bradost, and Qaradagh, nourishing villages and orchards before joining the Tigris.

The **Sirwan River** — known to the ancients as the Diyala — flows gracefully through **Hawraman** and **Darbandikhan**, its turquoise waters glimmering under the sun. Its Kurdish name means *"the whispering river,"* for its song among the rocks is said to calm the restless heart.

And then there is the **Tigris (Dîjla)** — mother of Mesopotamia, born in the Kurdish mountains where snowmelt and springs give birth to one of the world's oldest rivers. It carries the breath of Kurdistan to the plains of Iraq and beyond, binding north and south in a thread of history that no border can sever. To touch its cold waters is to feel the pulse of civilisation itself.

**Eastern Rivers – The Lifeblood of Rojhilat**

To the east, across the high plateaus of **Rojhilat (Eastern Kurdistan)**, flow other lifelines that have shaped Kurdish life for millennia. The **Zard Rûd**, whose name means *"the Yellow River,"* glows golden beneath the sunsets of **Kirmashan** and **Ilam**, while the **Zê (Zei / Ze River)** winds from the highlands of **Mahabad** and **Bokan**, watering the valleys of **Mukriyan** before merging with Lake Urmia.

The **Çemê Badinawe** flows through **Piranshar** and **Sardasht**, feeding the surrounding forests and orchards with crystal water that locals call *"the river of sweet taste."* Further east, the **Gadar** and **Gawra Rivers** descend from the **Shaho** and **Avroman** ranges, filling the plains where farmers still sing to the rhythm of their irrigation channels.

Each of these rivers is more than a stream — it is a heritage. Their waters carry the memory of the Kurdish dynasties, poets, and shepherds who once followed their flow.

**Northern Rivers – The Waters of Bakur and Red Kurdistan**

In **Northern Kurdistan (Bakur)**, the land of high mountains and long winters, the **Aras (Arasê)** flows eastward — mighty and eternal. Rising from the snowy heights near **Bingöl** and **Ararat**, it traces the ancient northern borderlands known as **Red Kurdistan (Kurdistana Sor)**. The Aras has been both bridge and boundary — dividing families through modern lines yet uniting them through memory and longing. Its Kurdish name, *Arasê*, lives in folk songs and laments, echoing the sorrow of separation and the strength of endurance.

Nearby, the **Murad Su (Çemê Mûrad)** and **Batman Rivers** descend from the highlands of **Dersim** and **Bingöl**, merging into the upper Tigris basin. These waters feed countless valleys of oak and pine, their sounds mingling with the songs of storks and shepherd flutes.

Further west, the **Khabur (Xabûr)** and **Sajur Rivers** flow southward through **Rojava (Western Kurdistan)**, joining the Euphrates on its way to Mesopotamia. Though smaller, they sustain the life of the desert plains, carrying with them the scent of wild mint and the breath of ancient winds.

Each river, great or small, speaks the same truth: water does not recognise borders — it flows where the mountain's heart tells it to go.

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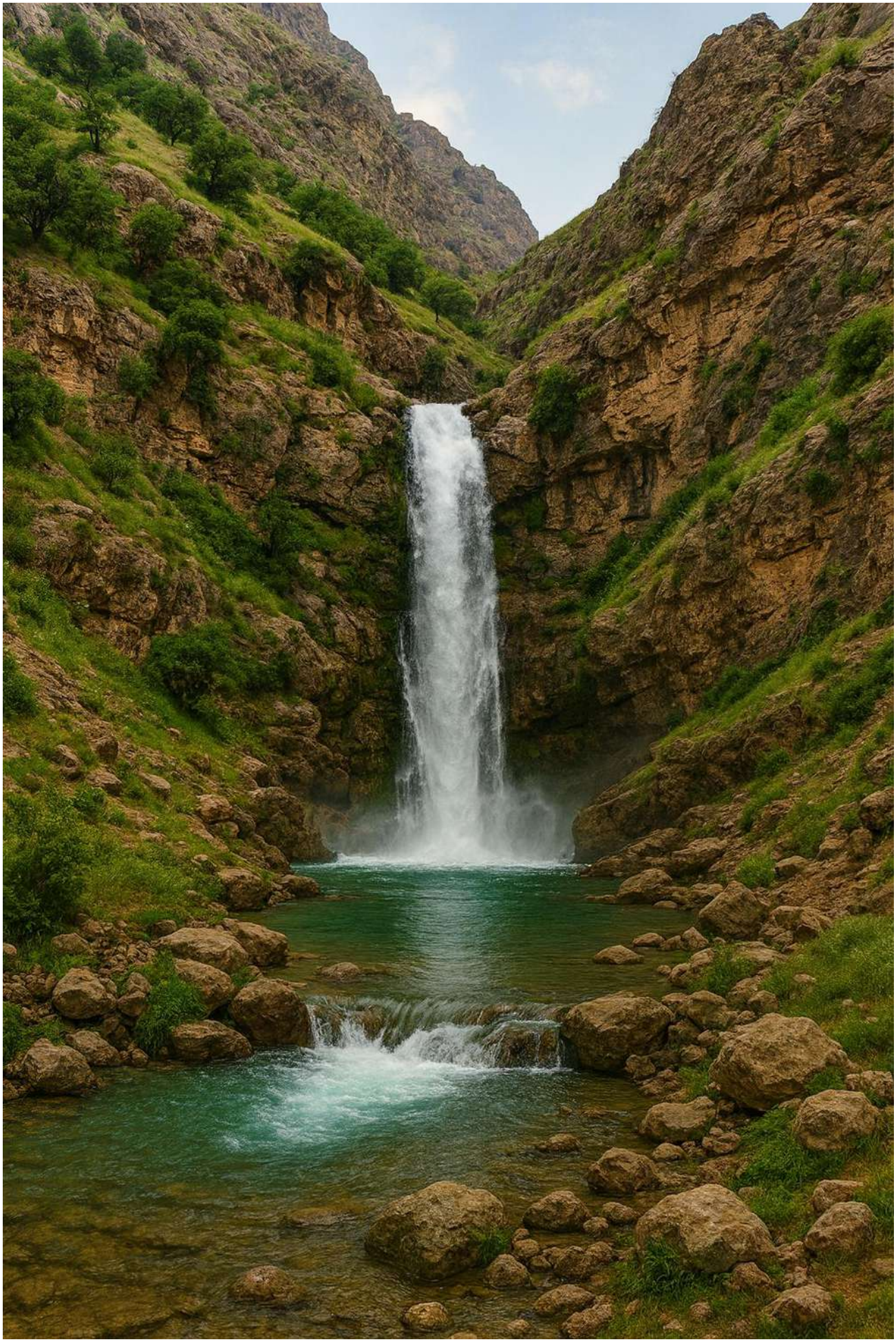
## 6.3 – The Sacred Springs and Waterfalls

Scattered across the highlands are countless springs and waterfalls — each one unique, each one sacred. The spring of **Kani Rash** in **Akre**, the cascades of **Gali Ali Beg**, the crystalline waters of **Ahmad Awa**, and the tranquil pools near **Halgurd's** foothills are among the beloved jewels of the land.

Locals often speak of them as living beings — *eyes of the mountain, tears of the earth, or blessings from heaven*. To drink from such a spring is seen not only as refreshment but renewal of spirit. In old tradition, before drinking, one whispers *Bismilla* and leaves a small stone nearby — a gesture of thanks to the mountain.

In **Dersim**, sacred springs such as **Pîrê Mûsa** and **Kaniya Sor** are still visited for healing and prayer, linking nature to faith.



## 6.4 – The Lakes: Mirrors of Sky and Memory

The lakes of Kurdistan mirror both heaven and history. Lake of Wan, Numurd, **Dukan**, **Darbandikhan**, **Zirê**, and **Wastan** shimmer under the sun like blue eyes of the earth. Around them, migratory birds gather in thousands, and fishermen cast their nets at dawn.

In **Eastern Kurdistan**, **Lake of Piranshar, Mihabad**, **Lake Urmia (Deryayê Urmiye)** — though wounded by drought and neglect — once stretched like a sea between the mountains, sustaining flamingos and salt islands. To the north, the smaller alpine lakes of **Halgurd**, **Shaho**, and **Ararat** remain pure and timeless, reflecting snow peaks like mirrors of eternity.

Each lake is a silent keeper of memories — of exiles, returns, and lives spent beside its shore.

## 6.5 – The Valleys and Plains: The Land Between the Mountains

Between river and ridge lie the great valleys — **Hawraman**, **Bradost**, **Qaradagh**, and **Rawanduz** — green labyrinths carved by patient water. In these valleys, orchards cling to terraced slopes, and villages rise where springs emerge.

Further south, the plains of **Garmian**, **Khanaqin**, and **Dehloran** stretch wide and golden beneath the summer sun. To the north, the **Muş Plain** and **Van Basin** cradle wetlands where reeds, willows, and migrating birds weave a living harmony.

Every valley is a page of history; every plain, a chapter of endurance. The mountains guard, the rivers write, and the plains remember.

## 6.6 – Water in Kurdish Culture and Spirit

To the Kurdish soul, water is not only a source of life — it is a sacred covenant between humanity and the earth. In old customs, people would bless a newborn with a few drops from a pure spring; before travel, a mother would sprinkle water on the path, saying, *"May your road flow clear."*

In songs and proverbs, water is ever-present:

"The Zab never sleeps — it carries the dreams of the mountains."
"A clear spring forgets no name."

In music, it flows through the **ney**, the reed flute born beside the river. In poetry, it symbolises longing and purity. And in memory, it unites all four parts of Kurdistan — for the same water that falls on Halgurd may one day reach Basra, Amed, or Urmia.

## 6.7 – Reflection: The Flowing Spirit of Kurdistan

The rivers, springs, and landscapes of Kurdistan remind us that life flows, changes, and renews itself endlessly. They are the veins of the homeland, connecting every living being — from the eagle above to the fish below — in one circle of existence.

To protect these waters is to protect the very spirit of Kurdistan. For when the rivers run free, the mountains breathe, and the land remembers who it is — wild, eternal, and alive.

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### List of Principal Rivers and Water Bodies of Kurdistan (for Reference)

| Region | Major Rivers | Lakes & Springs |
|---|---|---|
| **Southern (Başûr)** | Greater Zab, Lesser Zab, Sirwan, Tanjero | Dukan, Darbandikhan, Ahmad Awa, Gali Ali Beg |
| **Eastern (Rojhilat)** | Zard Rûd, Ze (Zê), Çemê Badinawe, Gadar, Gawra | Urmia, Shaho springs, Bên basin |
| **Northern (Bakur)** | Aras, Murad Su, Batman, Khabur (upper), Peri Su | Van, Muş wetlands, Dersim sacred springs |
| **Western (Rojava)** | Khabur (lower), Sajur, Euphrates (Firât) | Xabûr marshes, desert springs near Hesîçe |

# ⛰️ Section 7 – Mountains and Seasons of Kurdistan

## (Çiyay û Wextên Sali / چیا و وەرزەکانی ساڵ)

### The crown of the earth — the seasons that shape the soul of a people

The mountains of Kurdistan are not only the bones of the land but the guardians of its spirit. Rising like ancient giants, draped in forests and crowned with snow, they have sheltered our people for millennia — in war and peace, in storm and silence. From the proud peaks of **Halgurd**, **Qandil**, and **Shaho** to the long ridges of **Zagros** and **Avroman**, every mountain holds a name, a legend, and a memory. They are the living altars of our homeland, where sky and soil embrace.

The Kurdish word *çiya* means more than "mountain." It carries within it the idea of dignity, endurance, and rootedness. To live among the mountains is to learn patience and pride, to measure time not by clocks but by the slow changes of wind and light. The people of Kurdistan are shaped by their mountains — strong, resilient, and deeply bound to nature's rhythm.

When winter falls, the peaks are veiled in silence. Snow covers the passes, and the world turns white and still. Shepherds bring their flocks down to the lowlands, and life moves inward — into caves, hearths, and hearts. In these quiet months, stories and songs bloom beside the fire, keeping alive the warmth of community and hope. The mountain fox leaves its tracks on the snow, the eagle circles above the frozen valley, and the wind whispers the ancient hymns of the land.

Spring arrives like a song of resurrection. The snow melts into streams that rush down to awaken the valleys, feeding the rivers and orchards below. Hills once bare turn emerald; tulips and anemones break through the thawing soil, colouring the meadows in a painter's dream. This is the season of *newroz* — the Kurdish New Year — when the

earth is reborn, and so are we. Families climb the mountains to light fires at dusk, celebrating freedom, renewal, and the promise of another cycle of life.

Summer brings both beauty and challenge. The air grows warm, the light sharp and golden. The mountain goats leap among sunlit rocks, and shepherds guide their flocks to high pastures rich with herbs and grass. Life in the mountains beats to an ancient rhythm — sunrise, labour, laughter, and rest. Villages come alive with weddings, music, and the scent of fresh bread. It is also the time of endurance, when rivers shrink and the sun tests all who live beneath it. Yet even in the heat, the mountains keep their cool crowns of mist and snow above the world.

Autumn follows gently, cloaking the forests in gold and rust. The oaks drop their acorns, the pomegranates split with ripeness, and the farmers gather their harvest. The air smells of rain and smoke; it is a time of reflection, gratitude, and quiet pride. Many Kurdish poets have called autumn *the season of memory* — when the heart looks backward but the land still glows with life. It is the soft farewell before the long sleep of winter.

Through these four seasons, Kurdistan reveals its eternal rhythm — a circle of life that repeats but never tires. The mountains stand as witnesses to it all: to every migration and return, every birth and burial, every storm and dawn. They hold our ancestors' footsteps in their stones and echo our songs through their valleys.

To know Kurdistan is to know its mountains and seasons — for they are not separate from us. They shape our voices, our tempers, our dreams. They teach us that beauty and hardship walk hand in hand, that strength is born of endurance, and that no winter lasts forever.

As long as the mountains stand, Kurdistan endures — proud, patient, and free beneath the wide, eternal sky.

## 7.1 – The Mountains: Guardians of the Homeland

The mountains of Kurdistan are not only the bones of the land but the guardians of its spirit. Rising like ancient giants, draped in forests and crowned with snow, they have sheltered our people for millennia — in war and peace, in storm and silence. From the proud peaks of **Halgurd**, **Qandil**, and **Shaho** to the long ridges of **Zagros** and **Avroman**,

every mountain holds a name, a legend, and a memory. They are the living altars of our homeland, where sky and soil embrace.

From **Ararat (Agirî)** in the north to **Shaho** and **Qandil** in the south, the mountains rise as a continuous spine of endurance — shaping rivers, forests, and the Kurdish soul itself. The **Zagros Mountains** form the great heart of this land, stretching from **Van** to **Ilam**, while the **Kurdish Taurus (Çiyayên Serhedê)** guards the northern frontiers.

Each range carries a different song:

- **Halgurd–Sakran**, the peaks of purity and snow.
- **Qandil**, the mountain of freedom and defiance.
- **Shaho**, the mountain of mystics and poets.
- **Ararat**, the sacred northern crown — “the mountain of fire” that burns without flame.

For centuries, these mountains have been both refuge and rebellion — offering protection to shepherds, poets, and freedom fighters alike. The people of Kurdistan carry their shape in their hearts: proud, rooted, and unbroken.

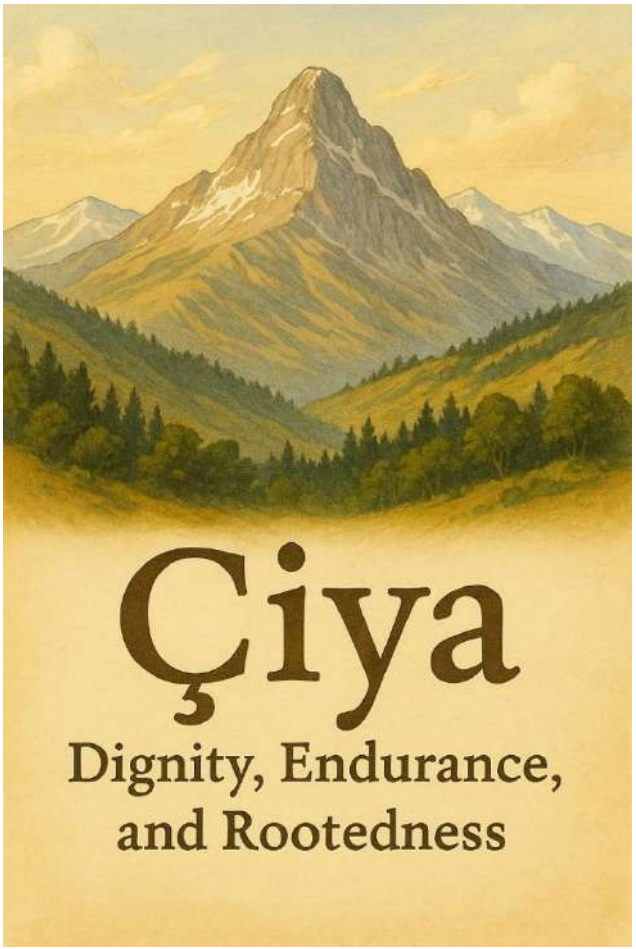
## 7.2 – The Meaning of Çiya

The Kurdish word **çiya** means more than “mountain.” It carries the idea of dignity, steadfastness, and depth of soul. To call someone “like the mountain” is to honour their endurance and quiet strength.

The mountain does not bend before the wind, yet it does not boast. It stands in silence, teaching patience to all who live beneath it. To the Kurdish people, the mountain is not distant — it is a companion, a teacher, and a witness.

“When the mountain breathes, the heart of Kurdistan beats.”

Among the peaks, the Kurdish spirit has learned its lessons of resilience. Every stone and shadow tells a truth: that freedom, like the mountain, cannot be uprooted.



## 7.3 – Winter: The Silence of Strength

When winter descends, the peaks wear white crowns, and the valleys grow still beneath their gaze. The land sleeps under snow, and the rivers move like breath beneath ice. Smoke rises gently from stone houses as families gather close to their hearths.

Shepherds bring their flocks to the lowlands; women spin wool, men carve tools, and children listen to stories that have crossed centuries. Outside, the fox leaves quiet tracks across the snow, and the eagle circles high above the frozen world.

Winter in Kurdistan is a time of reflection — a season of endurance and warmth of spirit. The land seems silent, yet beneath the snow, the seeds of spring are already dreaming.

“Winter is not death, but dreaming — the land’s long breath before rebirth.”

## 7.4 – Spring: The Rebirth of the Land (Newroz)

Spring arrives like a song of resurrection. The snow melts and becomes a thousand streams that rush to awaken the valleys. Hills once grey turn emerald, and the mountains bloom in crimson and gold.

The **tulip (Gulê Kurdistanê)** and **anemone (Gulî Bermêz)** rise proudly from the thawing soil, while the air fills with the hum of bees and the scent of wild thyme.

This is the season of **Newroz**, the Kurdish New Year — when families climb the hills to light fires that honour renewal, resistance, and love. Children dance *govend* around the flames; music drifts through the valleys, mingling with birdsong and the sound of rushing streams.

Spring in Kurdistan is both a beginning and a memory — a promise that no winter, however long, can silence the green heart of the land.

“Every spring in Kurdistan is a poem written in green — a promise that freedom, like life, always returns.”

## 7.5 – Summer: The Season of Endurance and Song

Summer brings brilliance and challenge alike. The air glows with heat; the light grows sharp and golden. The mountains stand bare and proud, revealing their bones and strength.

Shepherds lead their flocks to high pastures known as **zozan**, where wild herbs and cool streams offer rest. Children swim in mountain rivers; honey gatherers climb cliffs in search of golden combs. Villages hum with weddings, music, and laughter that echo through the night.

This is the time of labour and of joy — when endurance becomes celebration.

“Summer teaches endurance — the patience to work under fire and still find joy in shade and song.”

Even under the burning sun, the mountains keep their snow crowns above the clouds — silent reminders that coolness, too, is part of strength.

## 7.6 – Autumn: The Season of Memory

Autumn drifts gently over the land like a golden sigh. The oaks turn bronze and copper; the air smells of rain, fruit, and smoke. The **pomegranate** splits open with ripeness, the **walnut** drops from its shell, and the harvest fills the barns.

In the mountains, shepherds return from the high pastures, and families gather to share stories, dry herbs, and store grain for the winter ahead. The rivers slow, their voices soft, and the evenings stretch long with quiet gratitude.

Many Kurdish poets call autumn *the season of remembrance* — when the heart looks backward, yet the land still glows with life.

“When the mountain blushes gold, the year bows in gratitude.”

It is a season of reflection — of giving thanks for endurance, for the beauty of what was, and for the certainty that life will begin again.

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## 7.7 – Reflection: The Eternal Circle

Through these four seasons, Kurdistan reveals its eternal rhythm — a circle of life that repeats but never tires. The mountains stand as witnesses to all: to every migration and return, every birth and burial, every storm and dawn.

They hold the footsteps of ancestors in their stones and echo the songs of shepherds through their valleys. Each peak is a monument of memory; each wind carries whispers of lives once lived.

To know Kurdistan is to know its mountains and its seasons — for they are not separate from us. They shape our voices, our tempers, and our dreams. They teach that beauty and hardship walk hand in hand, that strength is born of endurance, and that no winter lasts forever.

“As long as the mountains stand, Kurdistan endures — proud, patient, and free beneath the wide, eternal sky.”

# 🌺 Section 8 – The Interdependence of Life

# (Yekgrtûyî Jiyan / یەکگرتووی ژیان)

### Harmony and survival in the wild heart of Kurdistan

In the great web of life that covers Kurdistan — from the peaks of Halgurd to the reeds of Khuzestan — nothing exists alone. Every creature, every leaf, every drop of water is bound to another. The land lives not through strength or beauty alone, but through balance — a delicate harmony between mountain and meadow, predator and prey, wind and root, birth and decay. This is the unwritten law of nature, older than all empires and wiser than any ruler: that life endures through unity.

The **birds** of Kurdistan carry the seeds of trees across valleys; the **bees** pollinate the flowers that feed the flocks; the **rivers** nourish the soil that grows the forests where wolves and deer find shelter. When the snow melts, it gives life to fish and farmers alike. Even the smallest insect has a role — breaking down what dies so that new life may rise. In this endless cycle of giving and receiving, nature speaks a truth our ancestors understood well: that survival is not a struggle against others, but a harmony with them.

For centuries, the Kurdish people lived by this rhythm. Nomads, shepherds, and farmers learned to move with the seasons, never taking more than the earth could give. They followed the water's path, respected the mountain's silence, and thanked the trees for their shade and firewood. In their songs and proverbs, nature is not a possession — it is a relative, a teacher, a mirror of the soul. To cut a tree without need was a sin; to waste water was to insult the sky.

But today, this balance stands in danger. Wars, industry, deforestation, and careless exploitation have wounded the land. The forests grow thin, the rivers carry plastic instead of purity, and many of the wild creatures that once roamed freely now walk on

the edge of disappearance — the Kurdistan leopard, the ibex, the eagle, even the honeybee. Yet nature, like the Kurdish spirit, refuses to surrender. Give her time, give her care, and she will heal herself — for life is persistent, and the mountains remember everything.

To protect Kurdistan's wildlife is more than a duty of science; it is an act of love and identity. Each living being, from the mighty oak to the smallest lizard, forms part of our collective heartbeat. When we save a forest, we save a village's rain; when we protect a river, we protect the songs of its fishermen; when we let a bird live, we preserve a piece of our own freedom.

Harmony, in the Kurdish sense, is not silence — it is coexistence. The shepherd's flute, the eagle's cry, the wind through the oaks, and the laughter of children playing by the stream are all parts of the same song. It is a song of survival, of endurance, and of gratitude. As long as that song continues, Kurdistan will never be silent.

Let us remember:
The **mountains** are the body,
The **rivers** are the blood,
The **forests** are the breath,
The **animals** are the spirit,
And the **people** are the heart.

Together, they form one living nation — not of borders or flags, but of life itself.

To live in harmony with this world is to understand that protecting nature is not about preserving the past; it is about ensuring the future — a future where the eagle still flies above Qandil, the tulip still blooms in Hawraman, the bee still hums in the orchards of Amedi, and the rivers still sing through the valleys of our eternal homeland.

For in protecting nature, we protect **Kurdistan's soul** — wild, free, and forever alive.

## 8.1 – The Web of Existence

From the peaks of Halgurd to the reeds of Khuzestan, Kurdistan breathes as one living organism. Every root, every wing, every drop of rain belongs to a vast and ancient web of life. In this land, nothing exists alone.

The birds carry the seeds of oak and pistachio across the valleys. The bees pollinate the flowers that feed the flocks. The rivers nourish the soil that grows the forests where wolves, deer, and people find shade. When the snow melts on the high peaks, it gives life to fish and farmers alike. Even the smallest insect serves a sacred purpose — breaking down what dies so that new life may rise.

In this endless cycle of giving and receiving, nature speaks an older truth — one our ancestors understood without books or science:

“In the mountains of Kurdistan, a bee’s flight can feed a village, and a river’s bend can hold a forest’s future.”

Life endures not through strength alone, but through balance — a harmony between predator and prey, wind and soil, light and darkness. This is the unwritten law of creation, older than any empire, wiser than any king.

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## 8.2 – Ancient Harmony: The Kurdish Way of Living with Nature

For centuries, the Kurdish people lived by this rhythm. Nomads, shepherds, and farmers followed the path of the water and the whisper of the wind. They took only what they needed and gave back through care and respect.

To cut a tree without reason was to wound the mountain. To waste water was to insult the sky. When a well ran dry, villagers placed a stone upon it as a sign of mourning — a gesture of reverence for what once gave life.

In Kurdish tradition, nature is not a possession but a relative, a teacher, and a reflection of the soul. The seasons shaped the people's wisdom as much as their work.
In the songs of the **dengbêjs**, the mountain listens to the stories of its children. The shepherd's flute echoes the voice of the wind. The poets call the sun "Mother of Hope" and the moon "Keeper of Secrets."

Even today, elders say:

"He who cuts a tree cuts his own breath."
"The mountain is a neighbour — greet it before you pass."

Such words carry not superstition but science in its oldest form — the understanding that life and survival depend on coexistence, not conquest.

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## 8.3 – Breaking the Balance: Modern Threats

Yet today, this ancient harmony trembles. Wars have scorched valleys; industries and neglect have scarred forests that once stretched unbroken for hundreds of kilometres.

The oak forests of the Zagros grow thin, cut faster than they can heal. Rivers like the Sirwan and Lesser Zab are dammed and diverted. Plastic and poison drift where trout once swam. The Kurdish leopard, the ibex, the eagle, and even the honeybee walk the edge of disappearance.

Each loss is not merely of a species, but of memory, of identity, of breath.

“When a river dies, it is not only fish that vanish — it is the memory of thirst, the voice of the valley, the rhythm of life itself.”

The balance that once held the land together is now strained, and the silence of the vanishing wilderness is the silence of warning.

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## 8.4 – The Spirit of Resilience

And yet — nature, like the Kurdish spirit, refuses to surrender. Give her time, give her peace, and she will heal herself.

In many valleys, people are already listening again. Villagers plant young oaks on the slopes where fire once passed. Bees return to old hives left empty for years. Springs once buried in war are cleared and flow again. Even in the quietest corners of the mountains, life whispers its return.

Kurdistan’s land endures — scarred, yes, but unbroken. Like its people, it learns to rise after every storm.

“Give her time, give her care, and she will heal — for the mountains remember everything.”

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## 8.5 – The Circle of Life and the Unity of All Things

The mountains are the body.
The rivers are the blood.
The forests are the breath.

The animals are the spirit.
And the people are the heart.

Together, they form one living nation — not of flags or borders, but of life itself.

The same water that nourishes a tulip in spring quenches a leopard's thirst in summer, feeds a farmer's orchard in autumn, and freezes as snow to guard the mountain through winter. Each act of nature is both giver and receiver — each breath, a continuation of the same song.

Harmony, in the Kurdish sense, is not silence. It is coexistence — the sound of many voices living as one. The shepherd's flute, the eagle's cry, the wind through the oaks, the laughter of children by a stream — all belong to the same melody.

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## 8.6 – Reflection: Guardians of Tomorrow

To protect Kurdistan's nature is more than a duty of science — it is an act of love and identity. Every living being, from the mighty oak to the smallest ant, forms part of our collective heartbeat. When we save a forest, we save a village's rain. When we protect a river, we protect the songs of its fishermen. When we let a bird live, we preserve a piece of our own freedom.

To protect nature is to protect memory. Every seed we plant, every river we keep clean, every creature we let live becomes part of the story of who we are.

May the next generation inherit not only our mountains and rivers, but our gratitude for them.

"For in protecting nature, we protect Kurdistan's soul — wild, free, and forever alive."

# 🌿 9-  Final Chapter: The Eternal Breath of Kurdistan

# (Hevla Hemîşeyî ya Kurdistanê)

### Where the mountains breathe and the soul remembers

There is a silence in Kurdistan that speaks louder than words — a silence of wind moving through the oaks, of snow falling on the high peaks, of rivers whispering to stones that have seen empires rise and vanish. It is the silence of endurance, of a land that has carried both suffering and song, and yet remains alive, steadfast, and luminous beneath the eternal sky.

To walk through Kurdistan is to walk through time itself. The mountains remember the first footsteps of shepherds, the laughter of children chasing butterflies, the songs of lovers echoing through valleys, and the prayers whispered at dawn beside a spring. Every leaf, every rock, every grain of dust carries the memory of those who lived with the land — not above it.

The wild life of Kurdistan is not merely a collection of creatures; it is a living symphony of existence — a sacred dance between creation and endurance. The eagle soaring over Qandil, the leopard moving silently among the cliffs of Shaho, the trout flashing through the waters of Sirwan, the tulip blooming from a crack in the stone — all of them breathe the same truth: that life, in its purest form, is freedom.

Our ancestors knew this. They sang to the rivers, blessed the trees, and respected the earth not as a possession, but as a mother. The Kurdish word *ax* — soil — means more than land; it means belonging, identity, and life itself. To lose touch with nature is to lose touch with who we are.

Yet, the spirit of Kurdistan endures. It flows through every season — in the wind that shapes the peaks, in the rain that softens the plains, in the honeybee’s hum, in the

shepherd’s flute, and in the laughter of a child watching a butterfly rise. The land does not forget its children; it waits for them to remember.

The eternal breath of Kurdistan is the breath of harmony — between man and mountain, between life and death, between what has been and what will come. As long as there is one oak standing, one bird singing, one spring flowing, Kurdistan lives.

And when the day ends, and the last light fades behind the ridges, the land will still whisper to those who listen:
*“Do not mourn the wild — you are part of it. Protect it, love it, and you will never be lost.”*

So let us walk gently upon this earth, speak softly to its rivers, and lift our eyes to the mountains that guard our dreams. For in every breath of wind, in every drop of rain, and in every heartbeat of nature, the soul of Kurdistan lives on — wild, free, and eternal.

The silence of the mountains becomes a voice — a call that echoes beyond poetry and into purpose.
For the story of Kurdistan’s wild is not only one to be felt, but one to be protected, remembered, and carried forward.

# Conclusion

As this book comes to its end, my heart remains with the rivers, mountains, and open skies of Kurdistan — the timeless home of the wild. Every page of this work has been a journey through the beauty, strength, and endurance of a land that continues to breathe life despite centuries of hardship. The creatures within these pages are not only inhabitants of nature; they are silent witnesses to history, guardians of memory, and symbols of the freedom that every living being deserves.

Kurdistan's wildlife is more than a collection of species — it is the living soul of a people and their homeland. From the golden eagle soaring above the Zagros peaks to the partridge calling from the rocky slopes, from the fox in the moonlit valleys to the kingfisher flashing over clear rivers, every creature carries a fragment of Kurdistan's spirit. Their existence reminds us that even when nations are divided and identities are denied, **nature continues to speak the truth with absolute honesty**.

For too long, even the identity of these animals has been mislabelled — called Persian, Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Syrian, or Arab — while their true home, their true story, is Kurdish and Zagrosian.
This book stands as a quiet act of correction, a declaration that the nature of Kurdistan has its own rightful name, history, and belonging.

To protect these animals is to protect the land.
To protect the land is to protect the identity of Kurdistan.
And to protect the identity is to honour the deep memory shared between nature and its people.

The preservation of Kurdistan's wildlife is, therefore, not only an environmental duty but an act of cultural survival. The Kurdish people have lived in harmony with their mountains for millennia, understanding the rhythm of the seasons, the voice of the

wind, and the footsteps of the wild. This ancient harmony is a treasure the world has overlooked — but one that must be revived, cherished, and defended.

Through this book, I have sought not only to record the scientific and visual beauty of these animals but also to share their emotional truth. The wildlife of Kurdistan is a reflection of a nation's endurance — strong, wounded, patient, and ever hopeful. The flight of an eagle mirrors the dream of freedom; the cry of a francolin echoes the longing for belonging; even the silence of the mountains speaks of resilience and unbroken hope.

Let this book be a call to awareness — that the wild must not vanish, that every name and every song of these birds and animals must live on. Let it remind us that the identity of a land begins with its nature, and without the protection of its creatures, no nation can truly call itself whole or free.

I dedicate this work to the children of Kurdistan — those who will inherit its mountains, skies, waters, and memories. May they grow to know these creatures by name, to honour them, to protect them, and to understand that **freedom is not only a human right, but the natural right of all living beings**.

The story of Kurdistan's wildlife does not end here.
It continues in every wing that rises above the mountains,
in every echo traveling through the valleys,
and in every heart that refuses to forget.

May this book remain a humble offering — a reminder that the beauty of Kurdistan, like the spirit of its people, **can never be caged**.